

## **“Ephesians – Letter to Saints”**

May 5, 2024

Ephesians 1:1-10

### **I. Introduction**

Every once in a while, a story appears about someone who died as a pauper but wasn't destitute. They lived as if they had no money and were often malnourished. But later, when people go through the earthly possessions of the deceased, money is found hidden in a mattress or in jars or even in the bank.

*The Guinness Book of World Records calls Hetty Green America's and the world's greatest miser. When she died in 1916, she left an estate valued at \$100 million, an especially large sum for that day. Today that would be equivalent to \$1.6 billion. She was so miserly that she ate cold oatmeal in order to save the expense of heating the water. When her son had a severe leg injury, she took so long trying to find a free clinic to treat him that his leg had to be amputated because of advanced infection. It has been said that she hastened her own death by bringing on a fit of apoplexy—a stroke—while arguing about the merits of skim milk because it was cheaper than whole milk.*

Since we finished our study of the Gospel according to Matthew, it seemed appropriate that we study a book like the Book of Ephesians. Ephesians is written to those who have accepted Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for the forgiveness of their sins. The problem is that many Christians, like Hetty Green, tend to treat **their** spiritual resources as something to be hoarded away, something to be saved not used. Just like the misers of the world, such believers are in danger of suffering from spiritual malnutrition because they do not take advantage of the resources and the storehouse of spiritual nourishment they have at their disposal. In this Letter to the Ephesians Paul reminded Christians what they possess and how they can claim and enjoy their possessions. As a letter to be shared with various congregations, Ephesians was written to remind Christians of the blessings they have in Christ Jesus.

In this short book the word “riches” is used five times, “grace” is used eleven times, “fullness,” “filled,” or “fills” six times, and the key phrase “in Christ” or “in Him” 23 times. Paul emphasized that

Christ is the source and the guarantee of every spiritual blessing and of all spiritual riches, and those who are in Him have access to all that Jesus is and has.

Sometime between 60 and 62 A.D., Paul wrote this letter from prison in Rome to believers whom he had led to the Lord and then pastored and discipled 10 years earlier. Because the phrase “in Ephesus” is not in all the early manuscripts, and because there is no mention of a local situation or mention of an individual believer, many scholars think this letter was intended to be circulated among all the churches in Asia Minor—Turkey. It may be that this letter was sent first to Ephesus and therefore became associated with that church.

The first three chapters of Ephesians emphasize doctrine, the last three chapters emphasize behavior. Or to put it differently, the first half is theological; the second half is practical or applied—kind a like “Christianity for Dummies.” In the first 2 verses of Ephesians, we find the greeting or the salutation of this letter.

## **II. The Author**

**A. His name** As in any letter written during this time, the name of the author appears first—in this case: Paul. Paul didn’t need to identify himself, he had spent close to 3 years in Ephesus—first, as an evangelist and then as a pastor and teacher. We don’t have the time, but you can read about the establishment of the church in Ephesus in [Acts 19](#); you can also read about the uproar that followed soon after he left.

### **B. His credentials**

**1. He was an apostle.** Even though it wasn’t necessary for those at Ephesus, Paul then gave some of his credentials to those who didn’t know him personally. First, he was an apostle. The word “apostle” means “*sent one*.” However, in the early church the word “*apostle*” had a more particular meaning. [Turn to Acts 1:15-22](#). Paul satisfied these requirements; He had seen the risen Lord. In [1 Corinthians 9:1](#) Paul wrote, “*Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord?*” In [1 Corinthians 15:8](#) Paul wrote: “*and last of all he, i.e., Jesus, appeared to me*

also, as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.” Paul had also been taught by Jesus Christ Himself—turn to Galatians 1:11-18. Paul was an apostle by the strictest definition.

**2. He was called by God.** Paul went on to say that he was an apostle “by the will of God.” Paul didn’t decide to be an apostle, he was called by God. Turn to the record of his experience on the road to Damascus—Acts 9:1-9. Writing to his protégé in 1 Timothy 1:12 Paul wrote: “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service.” Paul was an apostle called by God.

### III. The Recipients

**A. Saints** Following his credentials, Paul then addressed the recipients by two different names: “saints” and “the faithful.” The word “*saint*” has been totally twisted by mankind. Even the dictionary defines a saint incorrectly as “*a member of a religion who after death is formally designated as having led a life of exceptional holiness.*” This isn’t what Paul meant. Paul addressed his readers here in Ephesians and in other letters as saints—Ephesians 1:1, 15, 18; 3:18; 6:18; 2 Corinthians 13:13. These readers or saints are alive, not dead. The word “*saint*” is simple one of the many terms used in the New Testament to describe a Christian, i.e., “*one who has trusted Jesus Christ as Savior.*”

Actually, the word “*saint*” means “*one who has been set apart to be used by God.*” As Jesus said in John 17:14-16, the believer is *in* the world physically but not *of* the world spiritually. From God’s viewpoint, believers are those whom He has made holy or set apart. Just as God chose Paul, saints—Christians—have been chosen by God to be set apart and used by Him.

**B. Faithful in Christ Jesus** From man’s viewpoint, believers are those who are faithful—faithful in Christ Jesus. When a person acts in faith and trusts in Christ Jesus as their Lord and Savior, God acts in grace to give that person Christ’s own righteousness. It is Christ’s perfect righteousness—not a person’s own character or accomplishments, no matter how great they may seem, that makes every believer one of

God's saints through saving faith. [2 Corinthians 5:21](#) says, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

As was noted earlier, the phrase "in Christ" or "in Him" is used many times in this short letter. It describes the spiritual position of the believer. Every believer is identified with Christ; by faith, each believer is in Christ and therefore is able to draw on the wealth of Christ for his or her own daily living. There's the author, the recipients, and finally, there's the greeting.

#### **IV. The Greeting**

The greeting that Paul used was a common greeting among Christians. It is seen in most of Paul's letters as well as those written by Peter and John. Grace or, in Greek,—charis/Charisa—refers to "*the kindness of God towards undeserving people.*" You may remember that mercy, a word often seen in a greeting, means not getting what one does deserve, while grace means getting what one doesn't deserve. As sinners we all deserve hell but by trusting in faith in Jesus' sacrifice, we receive God's grace and receive eternal life something we don't deserve. [Acts 4:12](#) says, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

Because of their faith in Christ, because of the grace of God towards them, because their sins have been forgiven, every believer has peace with God and the peace of God—as [Philippians 4:7](#) says, a peace "which transcends all understanding." Peace is equivalent to the Hebrew "*shalom*" which means true spiritual prosperity and completeness—an inner peace and an outward peace.

This grace and this peace come "from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." God becomes our Father when we accept His grace and are transformed by the Holy Spirit. "God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" are not two different sources, but two appearances or forms of the same Source. They are equivalent—the Lord Jesus Christ is deity just like God the Father.

#### **V. Conclusion**

Whether or not this letter was addressed to the church in Ephesus, it was soon circulated to Christians in many churches in Paul's day and it is just as appropriate for Christians today. If you have

made Jesus your Lord and if you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead ([Romans 10:9](#)), this letter is addressed to you. You are one of the saints, one of the faithful ones to whom Paul is writing.

Your salvation isn't dependent on anything you do except in faith to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. As Paul will write in [Ephesians 2:8-9](#), "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast." Because of your faith and God's mercy and grace, you are a child of God. God is your Father. [Turn to Galatians 4:4-7](#). It's hard to imagine; it's almost too good to be true, but if you are a Christian, you are an heir of God—a joint heir with Jesus Christ! If you are a Christian, a child of God, your resources are unlimited! Don't hoard your resources; use them for God's work.

Considering these first two verses as well as what Jesus taught in Matthew, what does your life say about your family membership? In the Sermon on the Mount in [Matthew 6:24](#) Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money." Later, in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul is going to write that Christians are in a battle—God's family versus the devil's family. Are you a child of God or a child of the devil? You may say that you believe, but what does your heart—not your head—but what does your heart say? From your actions as well as your thoughts, what or who is number 1 in your life? There is an old phrase which goes, "*What you are doing speaks so loudly that I can't hear what you are saying!*" What do your actions say is the god of your life? When push comes to shove, who wins God or something or someone else? Can you say along with Joshua, "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" ([Joshua 24:15](#))? Are you truly a saint of God? Are you faithful?

## **Communion Devotion – May, 2024**

*I Corinthians 11:23-31*

The importance—the gravity—of the Lord’s Table cannot be over emphasized. Paul writes that because of misuse, some of the Corinthians were sick; others had died. There isn’t anything magical about these physical things—it’s matzos and grape juice. The important thing is what they stand for as we come together at Communion. This bread without yeast stands for the sinless body of Jesus Christ which was broken—given for you. This juice stands for the blood of the Son of God who willingly gave His life’s blood for you so that your sins could be forgiven. To eat this bread and drink this juice carelessly, that is, without any thought of what it means or any thought of the condition of your faith and your heart, is to eat and drink unworthily.

If Jesus is your Lord and Savior, this table, these elements are for you. As you come to the Table this morning, take time to inventory your heart and your life. It’s easy to say that you have faith in God. But can it be seen in your life? Does your faith lead to actions that may be different from the world’s actions? Is God’s love, agape love seen in your dealings with others? In other words, if Paul were to write a letter to the saints gathered in Tabernacle Baptist Church, would he be able to say that he has heard about the fruits of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints.

It is so easy to look at others and point fingers, but you are not responsible for them—you are only responsible for yourself. During the quiet time, while the elements are being passed, look at your life; your heart. Do people know that you are a Christian by your faith, by your actions, by your love? If not, get things right between you and God.

Communion is a time for every Christian to take inventory; Communion is also a time to thank God for the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ so that we can have hope in the life to come, so that we can be joint heirs with Jesus, so that we can be filled with God’s power. The Lord’s Table is a time to celebrate God’s goodness to us and for us. During the quiet time, take time to say “Thank you” to your loving heavenly Father.