

A few weeks ago, we spent some time overviewing the history, themes and the general message of Ephesians. Today, we will be taking a look at the first two verses. These are verses that are easily glanced over; however, through the study today, we will see that these verses provide the foundation for understanding the book and all of our future studies.

### Read Ephesians 1:1-14

*Eph 1:1 - Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus:*

**Paul starts off the passage by introducing himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus. Can you think of any other apostle's mentioned throughout scripture (c.f. Mat 10:1; Acts 1:24-26)?**

Matthew 10:1 – The 12 disciples are sent out with Jesus' authority. Word apostle is used in 10:2 interchangeably.

Acts 1:24-26 – The 11 apostles pray asking which man the Lord chose to take the ministry and apostleship from Judas

### What does it mean to be an apostle (c.f. Acts 1:1-2, 21-22)?

Acts 1:1-2 – Apostles were men chosen and commissioned by Jesus

Acts 1:21-22

- Apostles were witness to Christ's earthly ministry from the beginning to the end
- Apostles were witness to the resurrection
- They knew Jesus

### What was the role of an apostle (c.f. Acts 2:42-43; 1 Tim 2:7; Eph 4:11-13)?

- Acts 2:42-43
  - Teaching (ties back to Christ's ministry and the resurrection)
  - Performed miraculous signs to authenticate their message of the resurrection (credibility)
- 1 Tim 2:7
  - Teacher, preacher, proclaims the message of the resurrection
- Eph 4:11-13
  - Apostles were given to equip the saints for their work of the ministry
    - We have a role to play, we will come to this again later
  - End purpose was maturity throughout the church, to be more like Christ

**Which of Paul's actions made him worthy to be appointed to this apostolic authority (c.f. Acts 9:10-19; 1 Tim 1:12-16; Gal 1:13-16; Eph 3:7-8)? How does our understanding of worthiness differ from what the world understands?**

Small group discussion - trick question, Paul did nothing to that made him worthy.

Acts 9:10-19

- Paul actually had done much evil to the saints (13)
- God chose Paul, set him apart for his purpose to proclaim his name among the nations (15)

1 Tim 1:12-16

- Paul was appointed to service
- Previously was a sinner, however had received mercy and was an example of the type of people Christ had come to save

- If Paul can be saved, one of the “worst” sinners, there is hope for all – will see this a bit more in Galatians

Gal1:13-16

- Paul was set apart before he was born was called by God’s grace
- Paul tried to destroy the church

Eph 3:7-8

- Gift of God’s grace that Paul was made a minister

Leader’s intention:

- Highlight Paul’s unworthiness by his own eyes and the world’s eyes to be a minister (murdered Christians), yet he was called by God’s grace
  - Paul “worked harder” than all the apostle by God’s grace (1 Cor 15:9-10)
- Tie it to Ephesians 1:1, it was the will of God to appoint the apostleship to Paul, not by any merit – **byGRACE!**
- The world believes worth is taken or it is gained because you deserved/earned it

**Paul then identifies his audience as saints (Eph 1:1b). How would you describe what a saint is (c.f. Exo 19:5-6, Lev 11:44-45; 1 Peter 2:9-10; Rom 1:6-7; 1 Cor 1:2)?**

Exo 19:5-6, Lev 11:44-45

- God calls Israel his treasured holy nation
  - Expectation is for his people to obey him and be faithful
- God was the God of his people. He had saved and delivered his people, therefore they were to imitate him, they were set apart (holy)
  - Be holy as he was holy, their conduct was to be a distinct among the nations

1 Peter 2:9-10 (transition same idea from OT to NT)

- Chosen people, holy nation, and God’s possession
  - We have received mercy (because of Christ atoning sacrifice) and are to proclaim God’s excellencies

Rom 1:6-7

- Saints belong to Christ and are loved by God

1 Cor 1:2

- Saints are sanctified (made holy) in Christ
  - Saints are those that call upon the name of the Lord for salvation

Leader’s intention:

- Draw out idea that saints were called by God
  - WE ARE ALL SAINTS – SAINTS ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD (those that have professed faith in Christ for the forgiveness of sins)!
- Saints are to be faithful to God and are faithful in Christ (Eph 1:1)
- Being called a saint is by grace
  - They have not done anything to deserve it

**As a result of being called saints, what characteristics you expect to be manifested in their lifestyle and conduct?**

Small group discussion

In groups, consider:

**2 Chr 6:41**—Saints are to rejoice in God’s goodness - this implies we understand his goodness

**Psa 30:4**—Saints are to sing, praise, and thank God’s holy name – this implies we will praise God the way he wishes to be praised

**Colossians 2:6-7**— Saints are to be marked by thanksgiving, they will walk in Christ, being established by faith in his word and teaching – this implies that we will know what the word teaches us

**Eph 4:11-12**— Saints partake in the ministry – this implies we all have a role in building up the body into spiritual maturity

**Eph 5:1-4**—The lifestyles of saints will have nothing to do with sexual immorality (careful what we do with our bodies and minds), crude joking (careful what we say and think). These things have no place in our lives. We are to be imitators of God and walk in love with thanksgiving.

**How are some practical ways we can develop these characteristics? How are you developing them today?**

Personal reflection question -> to develop them, consider having someone hold you accountable to them

*Eph 1:2 - Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

“Grace and peace to you” was a common greeting in the early church that Paul uses throughout all of his letters. These are blessings that come twin fold from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. They are the source of these blessings.

**What do grace and peace have to do with the Christian life? What does grace mean? Peace?(c.f. Eph 2:1-10; Rom 5:1, 9)**

Have the groups define grace and peace and their relation to the Christian life.

- Grace
  - Receiving something good that you don’t deserve
  - Undeserved love and favour from God because of Christ death
    - Unmerited favour (blessings, redemption, sanctification, community, love for one another...)
- Peace
  - Draw out the gospel
    - God created all things good, man rebelled broke the relationship
    - God’s wrath upon man
    - Jesus lived for us and his righteous is now credited to us
    - We now have peace with God through Christ, where there once was enmity without Christ
    - Peace also extends to our relationships with others in the body of Christ (Jew/Gentile)
      - Focus on this will be considered in future studies

Eph 2:1-10 - Grace

- We were dead in our sin and were subject to God’s wrath (3) – this is what we deserved
- Because of God’s mercy and love, he made us alive – saved us in Christ (4-6) – this is undeserved
  - Saved refers to deliverance from God’s wrath
- It is not of mankind’s doing, it is by grace through faith (8-9)
  - Faith is a confident trust and reliance upon Christ Jesus and is the only means by which one can obtain salvation
- **Salvation in every respect is not of your own doing**

## Romans 5:1, 9 - Peace

- Justified by faith, we have peace
  - Through faith in Christ, the believer has been justified and declared righteous by God, once for all
  - This is an objective reality, objective standing place before God

### Leader's intention:

- Just as Paul didn't deserve his apostleship, we do not deserve our calling as saints (the people of God)
  - We deserved wrath
  - But God is rich in mercy and by his grace chose us for his good purposes
- Note that peace is a product of grace
  - It is all by grace that salvation been appointed to us (penalty for sin is paid) and that we are now at peace with God as a result of it

Reread Ephesians 1:3-14 together. In small groups summarize the blessings of grace we've received:

*Not meant to be covered in-depth.*

### 1. What has God done for us in the past (Eph 1:3-6)?

- Election
  - Chosen by God before the foundation of the world
  - To be holy and blameless
  - Adopted

### 2. What has Jesus done for us in the present (Eph 1:7-10)?

- Redemption
  - Through Christ's blood we have the forgiveness of sins
  - Unites us to God and to one another
  - Provided with wisdom to understand God's plan

### 3. What has the Holy Spirit done for us now in the present in anticipation for the future (Eph 1:11-14)?

- Sealed us for our inheritance
  - Sealed with the holy spirit now, a down payment of the inheritance
    - Ways to understand this inheritance
      - We have God and God has us:
        - God's inheritance is his people
        - Our inheritance is to be with God

### Leader's point:

- All of these actions and blessings have their foundation in Christ by grace.

**Write down something new that you learned. In small groups, share your thoughts with one another.**

Encourage the group to remember these things for the next study.

Grace. It is the foundation of Paul's apostolic ministry and the Christian's salvation. God is the one that sets apart for himself a chosen people and empowers them as his witness in the world. For the saint in Christ, knowing God's grace leads to praise and thanksgiving, understanding that we have been forgiven and called to salvation not by any merit of our own. Reflect today on the blessing of grace and the peace we've received in Christ. How are you encouraging your brother or sister of these truths today? How ought we to be showing this grace to others?