

PAUL'S GREETING; EPH. 1:1-2 (Ed O'Leary)

INTRODUCTION.

TODAY, ~ WE BEGIN AN IN-DEPTH EXAMINATION OF THE APOSTLE PAUL'S LETTER TO the church in Ephesus. ~ One of prison epistles, ~ Eph., Phil., Col., & Phile. during 1st

▶▶ Paul wrote Ephesians around A.D. 60. ~ That would make the letter 1,953 years old.

▷▷ And yet, ~ Paul's letter to the Ephesians is just as relevant today ~ as it was when he wrote it 1,953 years ago

THIS A.M., ~ WE WILL LOOK AT PAUL'S GREETING IN 1:~ 1-2. ~ BUT BEFORE WE do that, ~ it's important that we set the overall context of Ephesians.

SIMPLY PUT, ~ PAUL'S LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS CAN BE DIVIDED INTO THREE consecutive overarching themes.

▶▶ The first central theme is brought out in [chapters 1-3](#).

▷▷ In these chapters, ~ Paul spells out for us ~ "the [breadth and length and height and depth](#)" ~ of our salvation and many of its accompanying blessings ~ that God has brought about for us ~ and given us ~ through Jesus.

↪↪ In short, ~ Paul explains the doctrine of salvation.

▷▷ While [1: ~ 3](#) ~ is a summary for [1: ~ 3-14](#), ~ it actually also serves quite nicely as a good summary of the first central theme brought out in [chapters 1-3](#).

↪↪ Paul writes, ~ "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ~ who has blessed us in Christ ~ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."

→→ This succinctly defines what God has done for and given us in Jesus.

▷▷ I would suggest that one of Paul's purposes in explaining our great salvation and many of its attendant blessings ~ is for us to come away ~ with a greater appreciation for God and for what He has done for us ~ and given us ~ ¶¶

▷▷ And I would propose ~ that a further purpose that Paul had ~ in explaining our great salvation ~ and many of its attendant blessings ~ is to help us grow in the knowledge of our faith, ~ and to really know and understand what we have in Christ. ¶¶ 1/8

▶▶ The second overarching theme is brought out in ~ 4:1 - 6:9, ~ and deals with how we, ~ who have been given this great salvation and its accompanying blessings, ~ are to live.

▷▷ In 4:1, ~ Paul introduces and summarizes this section ~ by saying, ~ "I therefore, ~ a prisoner for the Lord, ~ urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called."

▷▷ The word "therefore" is a very important word in the NT epistles, ~ because it frequently serves as a signal.

↳↳ Quite often, ~ the authors use it to signal a switch from teaching truth to applying truth.

→→ Or to put it differently, ~ the word "therefore" ~ signals a change from teaching truth ~ to how Christians are to display the truth ~ in their thoughts, ~ words, ~ and lifestyle.

▷▷ And that's how Paul uses the word "therefore" here in 4:1. ~ He's signaling that he's switching from teaching truth ~ to applying truth.

▷▷ Because of the truth of chapters 1-3, ~ i.e., ~ because we have been given this great salvation and its attendant blessings, ~ // ~ Paul says, ~ in 4:1, ~ that we are "to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which [we] have been called."

↳↳ I.e., ~ we are to live a lifestyle that reflects the great salvation and its accompanying blessings that we have received through Jesus.

▷▷ And in ~ 4:2 ~ through ~ 6:9, ~ Paul emphasizes ~ and spells out for us, ~ what living "in a manner worthy of the calling to which we have been called" looks like.

↳↳ I.e., ~ he highlights and describes the lifestyle that reflects the great truth that God has given us salvation and its attendant blessings through Jesus.

▶▶ The third overarching theme of Ephesians is brought out in 6: ~ 10-20, ~ and deals with the spiritual warfare of the Christian.

▷▷ Many believers today have fallen for the false idea that the Christian life is easy and simple, ~ that our lives should be like a fun day at the playground.

▷▷ In Eph. 6: ~ 10-20, ~ Paul blows this kind of thinking right out of the water. ~ The truth is that the Christian life is not to be lived on the playground, ~ but on the battleground. ↴ ↴ 2/8

▷▷ We do not play on the jungle gym, ~ but live in a dangerous, ~ dark jungle, ~ surrounded by deadly spiritual enemies, ~ whose objective ~ is to destroy us.

▷▷ Immediately upon receiving Christ, ~ the believer finds himself in a constant struggle. ~ ~ He is engaged in a war, ~ a spiritual war.

▷▷ Believers are soldiers in spiritual combat. ~ ~ Christians are not called to a life of enjoyment and ease, ~ but to a life of hard conflict.

▷▷ And in Eph. 6: ~ 10-20, ~ Paul tells us how we are to fight this spiritual war in order to be victorious.

OK, ~ LET'S DIG IN TO VERSES 1-2.

IN VERSE 1a, ~ PAUL WRITES: ~ ~ "PAUL, ~ AN APOSTLE OF CHRIST JESUS BY THE will of God."

IN WHAT PAUL SAYS HERE, ~ WE SEE BOTH HIS APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY ~ AND HIS humility.

▶▶ He declares himself to be an apostle ~ with all of the authority of that office. ~ ~ But he also freely acknowledged that it was by God's will ~ and not his own that he was an apostle.

▷▷ Recall, ~ a few weeks ago, ~ when we discussed how the apostle Peter sandwiched his apostolic authority between his equality with all believers. ~ ~ Not dictators

▶▶ As we said then, ~ it's important to understand, ~ as the apostles knew full well, ~ that their authority was a delegated authority.

▷▷ I.e., ~ they had no authority in and of themselves, ~ they didn't even choose to be apostles.

↪↪ Paul couldn't take credit for it and didn't. ~ ~ He did not choose a career as an apostle. ~ ~ Not given by religious leaders or institution, ~ or family. ~ ~ He was not seeking it. ~ ~ On way to persecute . . . not to go to seminary

▷▷ Paul's apostleship was due to God's sovereign choice.

▷▷ Jesus chose the apostles and bestowed on them His authority.

↪↪ Paul became an apostle when he was converted and chosen by Jesus on the Damascus road. ↪↪ 3/8

→→In Acts 9:15a, ~ Jesus told Ananias, ~ "Go, ~ for he ~ [i.e., ~ Paul] ~ is a chosen instrument of mine ~ to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel."

▷▷Simply put, ~ the apostles were special messengers ~ chosen and sent by Jesus bearing His authority ~ and speaking and writing His message.

▷▷And as we noted, ~ when we discussed it in 1 Peter, ~ since all of the apostles were chosen and sent by Jesus ~ bearing His authority ~ and His message, ~ ¶¶

↪↪everything they wrote ~ are actually Jesus' messages to the church ~ and are therefore binding on all believers, ~ ¶¶

→→which means what Paul wrote here in Ephesians ~ is actually Jesus' message to the church ~ and binding on all believers.

↪↪Like Peter, ~ what Paul wrote is not just his opinion ~ or just his ideas that he thought he would share.

↪↪Once again we can paraphrase Paul's words in 2 Tim. 3:16-17. ~ "Ephesians is breathed out by God ~ and profitable for teaching, ~ for reproof, ~ for correction, ~ and for training in righteousness, ~ ¶¶

→→that the believer may be complete, ~ equipped for every good work."

↪↪Simply put, Ephesians is the word of God ~ and not the word of Paul ~ and not something optional for believers to follow only if they feel like it.

PAUL, ~ AN APOSTLE OF CHRIST JESUS.

▶▶The apostle Paul is an example that ~ no sinner in this life ~ is beyond the reach of the Savior.

▶▶Before his conversion, ~ Paul persecuted Christians.

▷▷In Acts 8: ~ 1a, ~ Luke tells us that Paul approved of Stephen's murder.

▷▷Acts 9:1-2 tells us, ~ "But Saul, ~ still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, ~ went to the high priest ~ and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, ~ so that if he found any belonging to the Way, ~ men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem." ¶¶ 4/8

▶▶ But Jesus didn't hold this against Paul. ~ Jesus didn't refuse to forgive Paul. ~ Jesus forgives all who come to Him in true repentance.

▶▶ Paul testifies to this ~ in 1 Tim. 1:12-14. ~ Paul writes, ~ "I thank him who has given me strength, ~ Christ Jesus our Lord, ~ because he judged me faithful, ~ appointing me to his service, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ though formerly I was a blasphemer, ~ persecutor, ~ and insolent opponent. ~ But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ~ and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus."

▶▶ No one, ~ in this life, ~ is beyond the reach of the Savior. ~ Is. 59:1 declares, ~ "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, ~ that it cannot save."

▷▷ If you've never accepted Christ, ~ it doesn't matter what you've done ~ or are doing. ~ In this life ~ you are not beyond the Lord's saving hand.

↪↪ As the hymn asks, ~ "depth of mercy! ~ can there be ~ Mercy still reserved for me?" ~ The answer is yes.

▶▶ What we are talking about here ~ should also be a word of encouragement for believers as well. ~ Sometimes when we sin we may think that God could never forgive us ~ The enemy

▷▷ But that's not true. ~ God will always forgive us.

↪↪ 1 Jn. 1:9 ~ tells us, ~ "If we confess our sins, ~ he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

↪↪ And 1 Jn. 2:1 ~ says, ~ "My little children, ~ I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. ~ But if anyone does sin, ~ we have an **advocate** with the Father, ~ Jesus Christ the righteous."

▷▷ In Jesus' parable of the prodigal son, ~ recorded in Lk. 15: ~ 11-32, ~ after the son comes to his senses ~ and decides to return to his father and admit that he has sinned "against heaven and before" his father, ~ Jesus tells us this in verse 20: ~ ¶¶

↪↪ "And he arose and came to his father. ~ But while he was still a long way off, ~ his father saw him and felt compassion, ~ and ran and embraced him ~ and kissed him."

→→ Picture that the father was constantly looking for him ~ Picture of God the Father ¶¶ 5/8

IN VERSE 1b, ~ PAUL IDENTIFIES HIS RECIPIENTS. ~~ HE SAYS, ~ "TO THE saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus."

THE WORD TRANSLATED AS "SAINTS" IS THE SAME WORD TRANSLATED AS "HOLY" IN other places.

▶▶ Paraphrase Paul's opening this way: ~~ "Paul, ~ an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, ~ to the holy ones who are in Ephesus."

▶▶ Now, ~ when Paul uses the term "saints," ~ or "holy ones," ~ he is not talking about some group of extremely holy people ~ or super spiritual Christians within the congregation.

▶▶ In the NT, ~ all Christians are referred to as "saints," ~ or "holy ones."

▶▶ At times, ~ as here in 1:1, ~ the word translated as "saints" ~ or as "holy" ~ refers to a believer's status. ~~ A status that comes from God and not from ourselves.

▷▷ The Greek word for these terms has in it ~ the idea of separation ~ and of difference.

↳↳ E.g., ~ perhaps for illustration purposes, ~ one could say that a church building is holy ~ because it is different than other buildings ~ and set apart from other buildings ~ for God and His service.

▷▷ Basically, ~ for the Christian, ~ being "holy," ~ or a "saint," ~ means that we are now set apart from the world, ~ for ~ God and His service.

↳↳ We are also now different from, ~ the world. ~~ In but not of

PAUL ADDS THE PHRASE, ~ "AND ARE FAITHFUL IN CHRIST JESUS."

▶▶ Unfortunately, ~ the way some Bible versions translate this ~ might lead us to think ~ that Paul had two different groups in mind.

▷▷ Not sure why they translated it this way, ~~ The Greek grammar indicates that one group is in view ~ and is described two ways: ~~ i.e., ~ as "saints" and "faithful."

▶▶ Simply put, ~ Paul is writing to the Christians in Ephesus and describes them two ways.

▷▷ The believers in Ephesus are "saints" ~ and ~ are "faithful" followers of Jesus. ~~ In describing them as "faithful," ~ Paul is commending them. ↯↯ 6/8

▶▶ And that leads us to a question for each one of us, ~ i.e., ~ "the saints," ~ here at NHCC to ask ourselves.

▷▷ If Paul knew me personally, ~ would he commend me as a faithful follower of Jesus?

↪↪ Let each one of us ponder that question in the coming week.

IN VERSE 2, ~ PAUL CONCLUDES HIS GREETING WITH A PRAYER FOR BELIEVERS.

PAUL PRAYS: ~~ "GRACE TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD OUR FATHER AND THE LORD Jesus Christ."

▶▶ We just discussed this word "grace" ~ and the various ways the NT defines it ~ a couple of weeks ago when finishing 1 Peter.

▷▷ As we noted, ~ we know that "grace," means free and undeserved favor. ~~ And we know that we are saved by God's grace, ~ His free and undeserved favor.

↪↪ We also saw that Peter defines grace as the teaching of God. ~~ Grace, ~ we noted as defined by the NT, ~ also encompasses God's word.

▷▷ And grace, ~ we said, ~ is also an ongoing provision from God, ~ enabling believers to live in conformity with His will ~ and to undertake the ministry and service that God has entrusted to them.

↪↪ IOW, ~ grace is also divine enablement, ~ empowering us to live the Christian life and to serve God.

▷▷ We see this meaning brought out in 2 Cor., ~ chap. 12, ~ verse 9, ~ in God's response to Paul's prayer that He remove Paul's thorn.

↪↪ Paul writes, ~ "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, ~ for my power is made perfect in weakness.'"

▷▷ It is very likely that, ~ here in Eph. 1: ~ 2, ~ Paul has this same meaning in view.

↪↪ Most likely, ~ Paul prays here ~ that God would give us the power we need to live the Christian life and to serve Him.

▶▶ Paul also prays for God to bestow "peace" upon us. ↯↯ 7/8

▷▷ Now, ~ before we discuss what "peace" means, ~ it is extremely important to understand what it does not mean. ~ "peace" does not mean absence of conflict.

↳↳ Furthermore, ~ it does not mean the prevention of problems or of turmoil. ~ It is not talking about something external.

▷▷ "peace" here means, ~ as we discussed at the end of 1 Peter, ~ "peace" here means ~ the inner assurance and tranquility that God places into the hearts of believers, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ producing confidence in Christ and an overwhelming sense of inner contentment no matter what circumstances we find ourselves in.

▷▷ And, ~ as we said at end of 1 Peter, ~ all of us believers desperately need this peace, ~ as we live out our Christians lives in this hostile, ~ sinful world, ~ surrounded by deadly spiritual enemies.

▶▶ So, ~ Paul is asking God to give us two things.

▷▷ 1st, ~ "grace," ~ i.e., ~ the divine enablement for living the Christian life and serving God.

▷▷ And 2nd, ~ "peace," ~ i.e., ~ the inner assurance and tranquility that brings about confidence in Christ and an overwhelming sense of inner contentment ~ no matter what circumstances we find ourselves in.

▶▶ And we need to make Paul's prayer our prayer. ~ Every day we need to pray that God would give us and our fellow believers grace and peace.

CONCLUSION.

IN CLOSING, ~ WE NEED TO MENTION A secondary theme that runs throughout Ephesians.

▶▶ Not secondary in importance to the 3 overarching themes ~ Secondary in the sense that it's not an overarching theme.

▷▷ And the theme is the centrality of Jesus in our salvation

↳↳ It will become abundantly clear, ~ as we move through Ephesians, ~ that the only reason Christians have a relationship with God is because of what Jesus did on Calvary.

LET'S PRAY 8/8