

## **Sermon Notes: *Grace and Peace to You (Eph. 1:1-2)***

**Intro:** In this letter, Paul instructs the Ephesians in gospel truths which most of his readers had already learned from him during his prior stay (Acts 20:31). How necessary! We must be instructed in the truths of the gospel over and over. “The gospel is not just the gate we must pass through one time but the path we must walk every day of our lives” (Tim Keller). “How can I be changed by God’s grace and power?” Paul’s gospel tells us. The opening verses testify to that grace and power.

**#1: An Authoritative Ambassador.** “Paul an apostle.” In all his NT letters, Paul addresses churches or individuals with a weighty sense of his own authority. He is deeply aware that the resurrected glorified Christ appeared to him and uniquely chose and commissioned him to herald the gospel. He knows he is an ambassador of God’s kingdom (6:20). He is God’s chosen delegate, God’s commissioned envoy. He has been sent by God with his authority to preach God’s gospel—salvation through faith in Jesus Christ! At the risk of stating the obvious—that makes paying attention to Paul’s gospel in Ephesians—actually God’s gospel—to be of the utmost importance, a matter of life or death! Why specifically? Paul was: An apostle. The Greek term *apostolos* means delegate, envoy, messenger. Like today’s ambassadors an apostle was a representative sent with the authority of his sender. An apostle of Jesus Christ. Jesus chose “twelve” disciples (learners) whom he named “apostles” (Lk 6:13). They were apostles in that he sent them out with his authority (Mt 10:1) to preach and teach about him. NT calls Jesus himself “the apostle... whom we confess” (Heb 3:1) because the Father uniquely chose and sent him. Just rejecting Jesus is rejecting the Father who sent him, so rejecting the apostles is rejecting Jesus (Lk 10:16). How remarkable that Paul who had once tried to destroy the faith became its greatest defender, preacher, and apostle. This transformation was not according to his will but God’s (1). Christ appeared to Paul when he was a violent opponent of the church and transformed him. He became a trophy of God’s sovereign grace and power. But in addition, Christ commissioned him to be an apostle to the Gentiles. As an apostle, he was an agent of new revelation from God—a revealer of the truths which would become the authoritative rule of Christian faith and practice. Jesus had promised that he would send the Spirit to accomplish this work through the apostles (Jn 16:13). Paul possessed that anointing as much as did Peter, James, and John (Gal 1:11-12). He proved it by the miracles he performed and the fruitfulness of his ministry (2 Cor 12:12; 1 Cor 15:9-10). We misunderstand, neglect, or forget God’s gospel to our detriment! Let us pray, as Paul does (1:17ff.), that the Spirit will enlighten our minds in understanding what God has already done in and for us in Christ so that we may walk accordingly, not by sight but by faith.

**#2: A Transformed People.** No other personality in the NT evidenced the transforming power of the gospel than Paul and perhaps no other people than the Ephesians. Ephesus was famous for its temple to Diana (one of the seven wonders of the world). But it was a center not only of pagan worship but of occult arts and practices (Acts 19). God performed great miracles through Paul and blessed his three year ministry. Ephesus became a center of Christianity and church planting in Asia Minor. Two things about these transformed people: Saints in Christ Jesus. “Saints” (holy ones) says what these believers are and “in Christ” where they are. The NT says that all believers—young and old, rich and poor, wise and simple--by virtue of their union with Christ are saints. Why? Because of what God has done for them through the gospel! (1) set them apart from the world by putting them in Christ. (2) consecrating them to his service by

Christ's life in them! (Eph 3:16, Col 3:3). Note well! Everything Paul urges the Ephesians to do (not beginning until 4:1!) is dependent on everything he tells us God has already done for us "in Christ." Ferguson: "our faithfulness is a response to God's grace." Saints in Ephesus. Saints live in two places at once! In Christ and in the world. How easily we fall to prey to one of two errors. In striving after faithfulness, we may either separate ourselves from the world completely or empathize with it and not live as transformed people. God, however, sets us apart from our culture by putting us in Christ, in part, so that we may reach our culture by living transformed lives! Tullian Tchividjian: "Truthfulness not trendiness is what new generations are thirsting for. They want to know there are different people out there with their sights set on a different world." It's when we go against the cultural grain because of who we are in Christ (saints, sons of God, etc.) that Christians reveal a faith worth living and dying for.

**#3: An Elevating Message.** Paul elevates the usual greeting to new heights. He wishes (prays) nothing less than "grace and peace" from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The two crown jewels of God's inheritance to his children! Peace. Not tranquility but well-being of soul because we are reconciled to a sovereign loving God (Rom 8:28; Phil 4:7). Grace. The means to peace. We must have peace with God through faith in Christ's shed blood for sins to have the peace of God.