

**Ephesians 1:1-2 1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, even those who believe in Christ Jesus, 2 grace to you and peace from God our Father and from Jesus Christ.**

**Paul, an apostle** --The title that Paul chooses is Apostle, by the perfect will of God the Father. There are probably some Jewish believers in Jesus in the congregation, because Paul wants to make sure that everyone knows that he is on the same page with both Jesus the Messiah, and with God the Father. The definition of an apostle (from the Greek apostolos) is "one who is sent" or "one commissioned, an official representative, like an ambassador, charged with a commission to spread the gospel.

While the others were commissioned directly by Jesus during his earthly ministry, Paul, then called Saul was called by the resurrected Christ. We read in Acts 9:1-5 **Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, 2 and asked for letters from him to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them in shackles to Jerusalem.** So Saul was literally on his way to imprison and kill Christians, under the authority of the High Priest. But that all changed when Jesus called him. And what a call. We can read about it Acts 9:3-6, but a fuller account is given in Acts 26 as Paul continues his testimony in verses 12-18 **12 "While so engaged, as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, 13 at midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who were journeying with me. 14 And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' 15 And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. 16 But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you as a servant and a witness not only to the things in which you have seen Me, but also to the things in which I will appear to you, 17 rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, 18 to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'** Paul was directly commissioned by Jesus as his representative, as a servant and witness to the gentiles, to turn us from darkness to light, sanctified by faith in Jesus. Paul's call was a dazzling, thunderous, brilliant revelation of the risen Christ. Why? Because that's what was needed to meet Paul where he was; to save Him. God will do whatever it takes to bring you to the place where He can save you, but you have to want to be saved. You have to be desiring God, seeking Him. Saul, although he was a murderer, thought he was destroying God's enemies. He was trying to serve God, in a very misguided way, twisted by the Pharisees, and High Priest. And God will meet you, no matter what you have done, but you have to want to meet Him. You have to be seeking Him, and want Him more you're your sinful life. Although, misguided, misdirected and murderous, Saul was trying to serve God, so once he learned the truth, Saul did an immediate about-face in his life, and started serving Jesus. Once he learned the truth, he started serving God in truth. Once Paul learned the truth, and was struck blind, he realized how blind that he had been in not recognizing Jesus as his Messiah. He was immediately horrified at his previous actions in persecuting Christians. Paul was a seeker of truth, and he now knew how much damage he'd caused God's kingdom, and he wanted a way, any way, to try to make amends for it.

**of Christ Jesus through the will of God**--Paul knew that his calling as an apostle, was completely undeserved, and only by God's great grace. We read in 1 Cor 15:7-11 **7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; 8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.** Paul's inner fight and over his actions, was one of the things that drove him so hard to serve Jesus with all his heart, and with great zeal. This was the point that Jesus was trying to make to his Pharisee host Simon, when the woman with

alabaster box of perfume anointed his feet with her tears (see Luke 7:40-47). The woman knew she had sinned much, and so knew there was much to forgive, and was all the more thankful to Jesus for forgiving her. Paul knew that he was a horrible sinner, and that he had been forgiven much, and so he served the Lord with great zeal, accepting Jesus' offer of grace through faith in Him.

Have you accepted Jesus' offer? Where were you when the Lord found you? What evil had you done? You may not have been the chief of sinners, but you'd racked up quite a debt against your soul, and against God. Ask yourself, "Where do I think that I would be right now, if God hadn't shown me grace through bringing me to saving faith in Jesus?". He forgave us that debt, and called us his child. Now look back, in thankfulness that the Lord has saved you, and praise His name for His grace and mercy. Now ask yourself—"has the Lord shown me grace since that day?" Ask yourself, "How has my life gone since that day when He saved me?" Hasn't Jesus continued to show you grace and mercy and guidance and wisdom, giving you His peace, His joy, His Love". Now what grace and mercy is He asking you to show to others? Is the heart-work that He is asking you to do so much to ask, when we remember what He has done for us? Who is Jesus asking you to forgive from the heart, in the name of Jesus, who has shown us such mercy and grace. Who is Jesus asking you to make amends to and reconcile with, performing the ministry of reconciliation? What work for His Kingdom is the Lord asking you to do? He has suffered and died for you, is it such a big thing that he's asking? All the other apostles met Jesus the man first, and then learned later that he was the Christ. While with Paul, in his conversion on the Road to Damascus, He met Jesus already resurrected in Power, as Lord and Christ first, then came to know him as a man and learned from him as a teacher. So he calls Him Christ Jesus instead of Jesus Christ

**By the Will of God**--In previous letters we see Paul give qualifications himself. Qualifications that could have given him a high office within the Pharisees, yet he states that it is by God's will, not man's that he is an apostle of the Christ Jesus. What this goes to show is that God can do more in a moment than a man can do in his lifetime. God changed Paul and gave him a new reason for living. Paul received a new purpose in life; to fulfill the true will of God.

**to the saints who are in Ephesus, even those who believe in Christ Jesus**--Christians are no longer just members of their city, or just Roman Citizens, they were first saints, citizens of Heaven and bond-servants of Jesus Christ, in loving service to Him. We are free in Jesus Christ, but free to serve Jesus, and perform those duties that He assigns us as His servant. Jesus is the basis of our fellowship as fellow saints, bound to Him, and bound together as fellow saints, belonging to Jesus Christ as Lord alone. Now Paul is writing to saints; believers. This word is from an Old Testament word for the People of God, it means a people consecrated to service, not only God's People, but God's Holy People, set apart by the Holy Spirit to manifest Jesus' character, and show the world what He is like.

He continually says All the saints at Ephesus throughout the letter because he wants to emphasize to this church, that despite their struggles and their persecution, and the spiritual warfare that they are under, must remember, as we all must, that we're all in this together. They had declared their allegiance to Jesus in a very Emperor-loving city, and they needed solidarity. We have declared our allegiance to Jesus, in a very idolatrous nation, and we need solidarity.

So Paul's greeting is simple but profound. 2 greetings: grace and peace. And this pair of greetings is what we find over and over again from Paul in his letters. 2 Cor, Rom, Philemon and here in Ephesians; same greeting. Here's a marvelous example of Paul taking a common greetings, and "turning into gospel" even the common greetings of the day. The typical traditional greeting in the Greek world was *chairein*-but Paul changes it to *Charis* or Grace. He then adds the traditional Jewish greeting of *shalom* or Peace in the sense of wholeness or well-being. So instead of the traditional "Greetings", or "Hello", Paul tells his brothers and sisters Grace and Peace to you. It's always Grace and Peace, never Peace and Grace. The grace of God and Christ is what is given to God's people, and Peace is the result of such a gift. In other words you cannot know the Peace of God until you've experienced the Grace of God. Peace flows from Grace, and both from God our Father, through the Lord Jesus Christ.