**Living Theology Friends1413**

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**“Ephesians: CH 1:1, 2”**

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**Eph 1:1 “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus, and {who are} faithful in Christ Jesus:”**

Paul starts immediately giving praise to God and he states that he is an apostle. We know from the Bible the implications of his making that statement. An apostle is one anointed by God to reveal the Word to the world and to His people:

*1Cor 2:12-13 “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, 13which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual {thoughts} with spiritual {words.}”*

Thus Paul is stating that this letter is from God. Also Paul says that he became an apostle by the will of God. Left to himself, Paul would have continued to persecute the Church. But God interfered and called Paul to be an apostle. God also calls us and without that call, none of us would choose God. None of us is good (Matt 19:16-17). God would be perfectly just to condemn us all to hell. But by His will He chose Paul as an apostle and many others as His children.

Now let us look closely at the audience to whom Paul wrote. He wrote to the **saints** at Ephesus as he did to other cities, and from this sentence we see three characteristics of the Christians.

1. Christians are saints. Biblically the word “saint” means someone who is set apart for God. This setting apart is something that God does absent of any human merit. God has set us apart from the world for His purposes. The setting apart occurs when God reaches out through the person and power of the Holy Spirit, regenerates a person, and then draws him or her into the company of God’s church. Every Christian is thus a saint. We now belong to a new kingdom, and we have God’s purpose to do here in this world. We are also called to become increasingly more saintly in character and actions. But always remember that we are already saints.
2. Christians are faithful and that word means exercising faith and it means continuing in the faith. Faith has three elements: intellectual, emotional, and volitional. We know the correct facts such as Christ’s death on the cross and His resurrection for us. We are moved by the facts, and then we act on those facts. Continuing in the faith means that we will persevere to the end in faith. Remember what Jesus said: *“But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.”* (Matt 10:33) Many of us face criticism at the workplace because we are Christians and we may be tempted to join the crowd, but Christians are faithful. There are still places in the world where people are being killed or terribly tortured because they are Christians. Most of us will probably never face such a choice of living or dying, but most of us will face the opportunity to accept criticism or deny Christ and, as Christians, we will be faithful.
3. Christians are in Christ (John 15:1-11). This is our state forever. Being “in Christ” is used a lot in the Bible and although very difficult to understand we must accept it as true for it changes us the more we understand it. We see this concept in: *“I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.”* (John 15:5)

We are part of the body of Christ and thus we cannot deny that of which we are a part. We died with Him on the cross as stated in*: “For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;”* (Rom 6:5-6)

Our unity with Christ means that our sin debt has been paid and that we are now totally righteous before the Father. It also means that the ability to live a life of complete obedience to the Father is attainable. Living a totally righteous life is thus a realistic goal, but one that we know will never be achieved while our old nature still battles with us. But one day we will be like Jesus so that our “in Christ” will indeed be total (1 John 3:2).

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

Paul further opens this great letter with a prayer for grace and peace to be with them and by implication – us. That grace and peace is from none other than God the Father and God the Son. It was common for Jews to greet each other with “Shalom”, but Paul goes way beyond that familiar greeting. He asks for grace and peace from both God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ to be with them. God’s grace is sufficient for all of our needs: *“And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.” (2 Cor 12:9)*

To understand peace, remember what Paul wrote: *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”* (Phil 4:6-7)

What a great prayer-greeting Paul has for us! It is God’s grace that begins our faith and the result of our faith is peace. Grace and peace are both the cause and the effect of faith. Without the grace of God there is no peace and these are from both the Father and the Son. This first sentence is virtually a condensation of the entire epistle. Paul will expound upon our need for grace and peace as he goes along. It is only by grace that God gives us faith so that we can be at peace with Him as we read in: *“Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” (Rom 5:1)* His grace continues so that we can have peace with others and within ourselves, as Paul will clarify. Man is so constructed that he cannot have peace with himself until he has peace with God, and he cannot have peace with God unless God first acts by His grace.