

God's Holy People: You are God's Masterpiece

Ephesians 1:1-2

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The profound and beautiful truth of who we are in Christ is revealed in the very first words of this letter, setting the stage for an incredible journey of discovery.

- **Questions:** "Have you ever felt misunderstood?" "Do you ever wonder what God really thinks of you?"
- **The Problem:** The world often defines us by our performance, our appearance, or our social status. This leads to a constant feeling of inadequacy and a search for worth in all the wrong places.
- **The Promise:** The book of **Ephesians is a letter that redefines our identity. It doesn't start with what we should do but with who we are.** You are God's masterpiece! You are a work of art, a finely crafted tapestry (the story of your life). It's a **letter of divine identity.**
- Let's look at the very beginning of this letter to discover the author, the audience, and the profound theme that will guide us through this series.

The Book of Ephesians

Based on the biblical account in the Book of Acts 18-19, it's most likely that the apostle Paul and Luke first met in the ancient city of **Troas**.

This conclusion is drawn from a subtle but significant change in the narrative of Acts. Luke begins to use the pronoun "we" in Acts 16:10 when describing the 2nd missionary journey. Before, the text uses "he" or "they" to describe Paul and his companions.

This occurs right after Paul has a vision of a man from Macedonia, who pleads with him, **"Come over to Macedonia and help us."** Following this vision, the text says: **"And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis."** (Acts 16:10-11)

Luke joined Paul's missionary team in Troas and accompanied him on the voyage to Philippi. This is where their close and lasting companionship began.

Players

Paul: Stayed in Corinth 1.5 years in the spring of 52. However, Paul left Corinth to return to Jerusalem and then to Syrian Antioch –primarily to complete a vow at Jerusalem he had taken earlier.

Luke: Author (doctor). Met Paul in Troas.

Priscilla and Aquila: (Jews, kicked out Rome, tentmakers). Met Paul in Corinth, shared in common trade. Joined his missionary team and stayed in Ephesus.

People Group: In Corinth, Paul begins to focus on non-jews (major shift in practice).

The Ephesians: The Body of Christ, the church that meets in Ephesus.

In Acts, the founding... In the Letter from Paul written in Rome... In Revelation chapter 1 & 2.

Silas and Timothy: Arrived in Corinth from Macedonia.

Conflict: But, Acts 18: ***9 And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, 10 for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people." 11 And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them."***

Apollos: A native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. He went on to Achaia.

Timothy and Erastus: Helpers Paul sent ahead to Macedonia.

1. The Author: Paul, the Apostle

Ephesians 1:1a: ***"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God..."***

- ***"Paul, an apostle..."***: The significance of the title, "an apostle." Paul wasn't self-appointed. **An apostle is a "sent one" with a divine commission.** His authority came from God, not from man. This means the message of Ephesians, and the entire Word of God, is not a human opinion; it is God's truth.

Application: We are in a season of talking about calling, setting apart (for a work), commissioning, ordaining... This is **NOT about authority or control or power, these are "things of the world."** We must keep all of these important terms and concepts in balance with the fact that "In Christ" means we are all His Sheep... He is the Shepherd, Lord, and King... we derive our purpose from Him.

... I have been called many things in my life... Terms to identify my role... music director, youth minister, janitor, associate pastor, journeyman missionary, International pastor, career missionary, team leader, strategy coordinator, Language and Cultural, pastor, counselor, Reverend Doctor, ...friend... No matter what I am called, the primary purpose and most important title of my calling, of your calling, is **servant!** Modeled after Jesus!

- ***"...by the will of God"***: Paul's ministry was a direct result of God's purpose, not his own ambition. This establishes the authority and divine origin of the letter. This isn't just a friendly greeting; it's a profound declaration of God's purpose. This speaks to the motivation for Paul to write... He wasn't just sending a nice letter to the churches... He was conveying what the Holy Spirit prompted him to write.

Application: You are created by God, chosen, gifted, and set apart for a purpose unique to you. Some of the themes we will be looking at:

"...you are created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Eph 2:10).

"...You are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession" (1 Peter 2:9).

This is both **personal** and **corporate!**

2. The Audience: The Holy People of God

Ephesians 1:1b: ***"...To God's holy people [in Ephesus], the faithful in Christ Jesus."***

- ***"God's holy people"***: "Holy." It doesn't mean perfect, but "set apart" for a special purpose. This is a foundational truth: you are not here by accident. You have been chosen and set apart by God. You are His people. This is a radical re-framing of our identity.

Application: Why are you in Madrid? Why are you at Immanuel Baptist Church? What is your role, your task, your calling in the Body of Christ? You may not, yet, know... that is okay, we are here to help you! Spiritual gifts training... just the beginning...

The best way to discover your spiritual gifting is in serving others! Pray: listening to Jesus as you practice and give of yourself!

- **"...the faithful in Christ Jesus":** This is the defining characteristic of the audience. They are not defined by their nationality, wealth, or past mistakes, but by their faith in Jesus. Our faith in Christ is the key that unlocks our new identity.

3. The Theme: Life in Christ

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

- **"Grace and Peace":** This is more than a standard greeting. This is a summary of the entire gospel.

Grace is God's undeserved favor—what He has done for us.

Grace and Mercy: two sides of one coin!

Remember Goodness and Mercy shall follow me...

Grace is God giving us what we do not deserve!

Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve!

Peace is the result of that grace –reconciliation with God and inner tranquility. You can't have one without the other. **This is a constant reminder that our entire spiritual life is a gift.**

Romans 5:1 **"Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith (justified), we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us."**

- **"in Christ Jesus":** This is the central theme of the entire letter and is the cornerstone of all we will talk about in Ephesians. **The phrase "in Christ," "in Him," or "in the beloved" appears dozens of times in Ephesians.**

Our identity, our purpose, our blessings—everything is found in our union with Christ.

We are... God's new-covenant people,

God's chosen people,

God's holy people,

God's worshipping people,

God's adopted people,

God's Redeemed people,

God's Heirs

Fullness of Him who fills all in all

We are... the Body of Christ

The Family of God

New Humanity

The Image of God

The new temple

The Bride of Christ

The unified people of God

The people of the Kingdom

We are not just followers of a philosophy; we are intimately connected to the living Savior. **In Christ, we are a new creation....**

Conclusion

We've seen that this letter is God's word for us, delivered by a one divinely appointed. This letter is addressed to you and me –God's holy people, set apart and defined by our faith in Jesus.

Read the book of Ephesians this week, specifically looking for the phrase "*in Christ.*"

I encourage you to reflect on what it means to be God's masterpiece.