

Ephesians 1:1–2 | “A God-Centered Greeting”  
*Preached on March 2, 2025 by Pastor Matt Brown*

Please turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 1, verses 1–2, as we begin a brand new series in the book of Ephesians this morning.

*And I’m really excited about this new series, and I hope that you are, too. [pauseeee]*

Ephesians is filled with doctrinal significance, as well as plenty of practical, day-to-day instruction. *[pause]*

*From our redemption to our marriage relationship, Ephesians talks about it. [pause]*

From what God has done for us, to what should come out of our mouths—Ephesians speaks about it.

*And from our spiritual battles to our workplace and home-life battles, Ephesians discusses it. [pauseee]*

It has such a good balance between doctrinal truth and how that truth should impact our daily lives.

*And I hope that you will come every week excited and ready to see what God has in store for us, as we work through this powerful epistle. [pause]*

Why don’t you invite someone to come to church, mentioning that we will be working through the book of Ephesians?

*This book will be so important for both the believer and the unbeliever, alike. [pauseeee]*

Now before we jump into the book, let’s get some background information down, which will be helpful for us in understanding it. *[pause]*

*What we call the book of Ephesians is actually an epistle, that is, it’s a letter written by someone to someone else.*

And this epistle was written by the Apostle Paul to a group of Christians who lived in Ephesus. *[pause]*

*From indications in the letter, Paul appears to be writing to a primarily Gentile audience, though I’m sure there were some Jewish converts among them, too. [pauseeee]*

Now where was Ephesus? Well let’s look at a map. *[SHOW MAP]*

*Ephesus is there on the western coast of Asia Minor, which is now in the modern country of Turkey.*

And Ephesus was a major, larger city of the day. *[pause]*

It was one of the most populous cities of the time, and was sort of seen as the connection point between Rome and the Eastern regions of the Roman Empire. *[pause]*

Many roads went through Ephesus, which made it important and brought many people through it. *[pause]*

Due to this, it was a multi-ethnic city with various people groups living together.

Also, since it was a vital port city, it was a very wealthy city, too. *[pauseeeee]*

Now what about the *religion* of Ephesus, what was that like at the time of this letter? *[pause]*

Ephesus was a very pagan city, as were most cities of that day...

The worship of the goddess, Artemis, was huge in the city, though they also worshipped many other gods, too. *[pause]*

There was a massive temple to Artemis there, in fact, it was one of the biggest buildings in antiquity, and considered one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world. *[pauseee]*

That's not all, for Ephesus was also a huge place for the practice of magic. *[pause]*

Magic was used to try to control or influence the spirit world with charms, incantations, and rituals being used.

And we actually see these religious elements at play in the book of Acts when Paul ministers in Ephesus. *[pause]*

He ministers for 2–3 years there, so that many people hear the Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

And we learn that so many started believing in Jesus that they burn their books about magic. *[pause]*

Not only that, but because so many people start believing in Jesus, the silversmiths and craftsmen get upset because they were losing business. *[pause]*

You see, the silversmiths would make these silver shrines of Artemis, and the evangelization of the city was hurting business.

So there's a great uproar about Paul, but eventually the town clerk is able to quiet everyone down.

And that's when Paul decides to move on to another city. *[pauseeeee]*

As you can tell from that story in Acts, magic was huge in the city, as well as the worship of Artemis.

---

<sup>1</sup> The following information is taken from Acts 19.

And Paul had first-hand experience with seeing that, and also with getting to know the people.  
[pauseee]

He truly loved the Ephesians so much that at a later time, he called for the elders to meet him, so as to give a tear-filled farewell before he ventured off to Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> [pauseeee]

That's Paul's history with the Ephesians, and now he is writing this letter, most likely from prison in Rome maybe 5–7 years after ministering there. [pauseeee]

So think about the Ephesians and the importance of this letter...

They were relatively new Christians, and after leaving polytheism, magic, and the like—the Ephesians needed to be grounded in the truth and how to live in light of it.

And that's where the letter of Ephesians comes in. [pause]

They needed to be reminded of Christ's power and victory over the spiritual forces of darkness.

They needed to be taught how to live a godly, Christian lifestyle after living a pagan lifestyle for so long.

And due to living in a multi-ethnic city, which created a multi-ethnic church, the people needed to be taught about the unity that Jews and Gentiles have in Christ. [pause]

We see all of those elements present in this letter. [pauseeee]

Knowing all of this background material will be very helpful as we work through this book together. [pauseeee]

Now back to the text at hand...

This morning, we will be just focusing on the first two introductory verses of Ephesians 1—let's READ them. [READ]

Talk about a God-centered greeting! [pauseeee]

Have you ever heard someone greet you in a way that points to the Lord?...

Maybe they say, "Isn't this a beautiful day that the Lord has made?" or maybe they simply say, "God is good." [pause]

One that always catches people off-guard, but is such a Lord-centered greeting is when someone asks you how you are doing and you say, "Better than I deserve." [pause]

It points to the great grace of God in your life that you don't deserve, and usually gets people thinking. [pauseeee]

---

<sup>2</sup> See Acts 20:17–38.

Those kinds of greetings turn what is usually a basic greeting, and converts them into a herald of truth about God. *[pause]*

Likewise, Paul gives us a God-centered greeting in his introduction to the Ephesians.

And Paul doesn't waste papyrus space, nor does he waste words, but he made sure that even the greeting of his letter was packed with truth. *[pauseeee]*

No needless words were written, but all was done purposefully and intentionally to point to God and our identity in Christ.

And the reason why Paul did this was because Paul was a God-centered man, so his greetings were also written in a God-centered way. *[pauseeee]*

Could that be said of us—are we truly God-centered people? *[pause]*

That's what we will be challenged with today as we look at just 2 verses this morning. *[pauseeee]*

*Thinking deeply about what we see here, we see first that we receive...*

### **I. Our positions BY the Lord.**

Paul starts out by identifying his name and position, he is “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.” *[pause]*

Paul was not just some ordinary Christian off the street, rather he was an apostle of Jesus. *[pause]*

The apostles were the 12 disciples, plus Paul, who all saw the resurrected Christ, and who were commissioned by Christ to go out for Him as His authorized ambassadors. *[pause]*

They could perform miracles,<sup>3</sup> and taught with authority.

They became the foundation of the church, so that it had a solid base, with Christ as the chief cornerstone.<sup>4</sup> *[pause]*

So by Paul mentioning that he is an apostle right at the beginning of the letter, it reminds us that this is no ordinary letter.

Rather, Paul is speaking with authority, for he is speaking on behalf of Christ. *[pause]*

No wonder that this letter is a part of the canon of Scripture, and is therefore, considered God's Word to us...

---

<sup>3</sup> See 2 Corinthians 12:12.

<sup>4</sup> A reference to Ephesians 2:20.

Paul was called by Christ to proclaim and represent His message, and in that position, he was writing. *[pause]*

This means that we must pay attention and see the importance of the words written in this book.

This is ultimately God’s Word to us, as Paul “spoke from God...carried along by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>5</sup> *[pauseeee]*

What will be your mentality as we work through this letter? *[pause]*

Will it be one of submission to God’s Word as God’s Word, or will it be one of selective choosing of what you want to listen to and obey? *[pauseeee]*

Sadly, many people who profess to be Christians seem to try to argue with Scripture, acting like they have more authority than it. *[pause]*

If there is something hard to take, or offensive to their ears in it, they try to skirt around it or minimize it.

That ought not to be! *[pause]*

This letter is from God, written by one of His apostles on His behalf.

And Paul wrote this letter exactly how God wanted it to be written, for God was speaking through Him. *[pause]*

So let’s all bow the knee to God’s Word as we work through Ephesians. *[pauseeeeeee]*

You know, it matters who appoints you to a job. *[pause]*

If some random person off the street said, “I’m appointing you to be the new chief of staff for the president,” you would brush it off as a joke.

But if the president was the one who appointed you, then that would make a world of a difference. *[pause]*

The higher up and more significant the person who appoints you to something, the greater the responsibility and the privilege. *[pause]*

Well Paul says that God Himself appointed him to be an apostle, and there’s no one higher or more significant. *[pauseeee]*

Paul says that he’s an apostle “by the will of God”. *[pause]*

It’s something special to be chosen for a job by a friend, it’s something special to be chosen for a job by a group of people...

---

<sup>5</sup> 2 Peter 1:21.

But it's something entirely higher and greater and more monumental to be chosen for a job by the Creator God Himself. *[pauseee]*

It was the will, the determination, the choice, the purpose of God to make Paul an apostle, and this is so clear in Paul's conversion story. *[pauseee]*

Paul recounts the story of how God met him, changed him, and appointed him in Acts 26, where Paul saw a bright light, fell to the ground, and Jesus appeared to him.<sup>6</sup> *[pause]*

When Jesus talks to him, he tells Paul that He's appointing him to be His servant and witness, ultimately in order to lead people to be saved.

Talk about an undeniable appointment by the will of God! *[pauseeee]*

By highlighting this, Paul is demonstrating to us that he didn't make himself into an apostle.

He didn't one day say, "You know what would be cool? Being an apostle. I'll start doing that."

No, that's not how this worked.

He was only an apostle because God wanted Him to be. *[pause]*

His position and authority are not man-made, but God-ordained, and that means that Paul has the right to speak with authority here. *[pauseeee]*

Now, of course, none of us are one of the select few apostles, but this reminds us that any position that we have is ultimately given to us by God. *[pause]*

Way too often we act like, "Yeah, God appointed Paul and the other apostles," but then when it comes to our jobs, titles, and positions, we think that it's all of our own doing. *[pause]*

We too quickly try to separate the secular from the sacred in that way, but isn't God in control of *all things*? *[pause]*

Doesn't He care about *all of life*?

Isn't He concerned with His witnesses, who go out into the various workplaces of the world? *[pauseeee]*

We haven't had some dramatic appointment like Paul, but He does give us gifts and opportunities that we are called to use at a specific place and time. *[pause]*

That means that ultimately our positions come BY means of the Lord—how else can you describe your gifts, your knowledge, your opportunity, and your current job? *[pause]*

If it wasn't because of God, then was it really you? *[pause]*

---

<sup>6</sup> Acts 26:12–18.

Did you give yourself your natural gifts and talents? Really? Are you so bold to say that?

Of course not!

Everything comes from the Lord, so who are we to boast in our positions? *[pauseeee]*

How often do you thank God for providing you with your talents and position? *[pause]*

We should be thankful to the Lord for whatever we have, and we should see what we are doing as important, since God was in control of it.

And that means that you can be thankful and see the significance of God leading you to be a teacher. *[pause]*

That means that you can be thankful and see the significance of God leading you to be a stay-at-home mom, a plumber, a carpenter, a businessman, a lawyer, whatever it may be.

He doesn't call any of us to be apostles, but He has called us to be *something*. *[pauseeee]*

Are you thankful for that, and do you see your position as important? *[pauseeee]*

*So we see in these 2 introductory verses that we receive our positions by the Lord, but we also receive...*

## II. Our identity IN the Lord.

Paul says there in the second part of verse 1, “To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus.” *[pause]*

Here we see who Paul is writing to, but his description of them is packed with significance....

They aren't just a group of people living in Ephesus—they are “the saints who are in Ephesus.” *[pause]*

They aren't just a bunch of Ephesians, they are called “faithful in Christ Jesus.” *[pause]*

Paul is highlighting the Ephesians' *identity*.

They are more than mere fellow individuals—their identity is deeper than that. *[pauseeee]*

How do you view your identity? *[pause]*

Sometimes we don't view our identity as being in Christ, but we act like our identity is based solely in worldly terms...

We think that our job title encapsulates our identity, we think that our looks sums up our identity, or some other thing like that. *[pause]*

But those things do not get down to the roots of our identity—our primary and most significant identity is found in Christ! *[pauseeee]*

In a world concerned with identifying themselves based on race, so-called sexual orientation, gender, and things like that, we identify ourselves based on Christ! *[pauseeee]*

Do you see your true identity as a saint, or do you view your identity in more worldly terms? *[pauseeeee]*

Max Anders gives this illustration of how “ducks tend to imprint soon after birth. *[pause]*

To ‘imprint’ means that they attach themselves to the first thing they see after they hatch, thinking they are ‘that’ thing...

[But] this phenomenon backfires, occasionally. *[pause]*

Once, for example, a duckling was hatched under the watchful eye of a motherly collie dog. *[pause]*

The baby duck took one look at the collie and decided that the dog was its mother.

[And] it followed the collie around, ran to it for protection, and slept with it at night... *[pause]*

When a car pulled into the driveway, along with the dog, the duck would run out from under the front porch quacking viciously, trying to peck the tires. *[pauseeee]*

Some things could not be changed, however.

The duck still quacked, enjoyed the water, and flapped its wings—sometimes it acted like a duck, and sometimes it acted like a dog.” *[pause]*

So Max Anders says, “Christians often experience a similar confusion in identity.”<sup>7</sup> *[pauseeee]*

Instead of reminding ourselves that we are those “in Christ”, we confuse our identity because we are being “imprinted” with the world’s ideas of what identity is.

No, Paul cuts through all of the noise of what the world screams at us about our identity, and pushes us to see that our identity is found in Christ. *[pause]*

In fact, this identity of being in Christ affects our relationships with one another. *[pause]*

Though Paul only knew the Ephesian Christians for 2–3 years in person, he could speak to them this way.

And so likewise, our relationships with one another come from being ‘in Christ’. *[pause]*

---

<sup>7</sup> The illustration above and this statement taken from: Max Anders, *Galatians-Colossians*, vol. 8, *Holman New Testament Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 90.



We are not merely individual saints, but saints *together*. *[pause]*

We are not just individuals who are faithful, but we are a group of the faithful in Christ Jesus. *[pause]*

Our relationships are possible because of Christ—now we have a special link together, and that link is Christ.

And that’s why Paul can write to them, care about them, and desire for them to be blessed—they were all ‘in Christ’ together. *[pauseeeee]*

Rethink and reshape your identity based on being in Christ Jesus.

Do not be influenced by how the world views identity, but base it on something more solid, more eternal, more vital. *[pauseeeee]*

Paul here calls the Ephesians: “saints”, but what does that mean? *[pause]*

A saint is really “a holy one”—it is someone set apart by God, for they are deemed holy. *[pause]*

Now many people think that there is a special group of Christians that are considered saints, but that’s unbiblical.

To be a Christian is to be a saint. *[pause]*

Paul isn’t writing to some special, high up class of Christians among the Ephesian Christians, he’s writing to the Christians in Ephesus, who are also called “saints”. *[pauseeeee]*

If you are truly a Christian, do you view yourself as a saint? *[pause]*

What a blessing to be called “a holy one” by God, for we are so undeserving of such a title! *[pause]*

We have sinned against God, and often mess up time and time again, and yet God calls us saints?! *[pause]*

The only reason that we can be called this is because of Jesus Christ, who died in our place, and whose righteousness is credited to our account. *[pause]*

Due to His work on our behalf, we can be called holy ones, so let’s live like holy ones! *[pauseeeee]*

Imagine the difference it would make in your life if you remembered that you are a saint in God’s eyes.

It would lead you to rejoice in thanksgiving for God’s grace, but it would also instill in you a desire to live up to that high title.

So, saints who are in Clearfield, let's rejoice and live in light of our precious identity in Christ!  
*[pauseeee]*

Not only are the Ephesian Christians called saints but they are also called 'faithful'. *[pause]*

Now there is some question as to whether the Greek word used here refers to the faith that they have, or the faithfulness that they show.

But really, you can't separate the two, can you? *[pause]*

Those who have faith live faithful lives.

Therefore, those who are saints are faithful, and we must remember that faithfulness is important to God. *[pauseeee]*

Some people say, "I believed in Christ once," but now they have nothing to do with Christ.  
*[pause]*

There's something wrong there.

They act like being faithful is optional, like it's only needed if you want to be one of those Christians who *really* get into it, so to say. *[pause]*

No, Christians are to be faithful, that's what God expects, and if you are not faithful at all, you should question your faith, whether it is genuine or not. *[pauseeee]*

To be faithful is to be steadfast in your love for God and your service to God.

It's to live for Him throughout your life. *[pauseeee]*

Are you faithful? *[pause]*

Do you steadfastly follow the Lord and serve Him with your life? *[pause]*

Faithfulness is not perfection, but it is a life characterized by steadfast striving to follow after Christ. *[pauseeee]*

We receive our identity from the Lord. *[pause]*

The Ephesians weren't defined by their past, nor were they defined by the world's view of them.

Rather, they were defined by Christ, who made them holy in His sight through faith, and called them saints. *[pause]*

How could they not be faithful to Him, who in grace, did so much for them? *[pauseeee]*

Do you remember and live out your new identity in Christ? Is that your primary identity?  
*[pauseeee]*

*Not only do we receive our positions and identity from the Lord, but also, we receive...*

### **III. Our blessings FROM the Lord.**

In verse 2, Paul greets the Ephesians by saying, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” *[pause]*

*Paul basically infuses a basic greeting with theological weight. [pauseeee]*

Isn't it interesting how we don't typically do this? *[pause]*

*We greet people, and yes, we often greet people with kindness, but that's different from greeting people like Paul did...*

His greeting here was a prayer or wish for blessing to be upon the Ephesians. *[pause]*

*You can tell that Paul cared about and loved them in Christ.*

They weren't just another church under his belt, or another number to him.

*No, he genuinely wanted them to experience the continual grace and peace of God. [pauseeee]*

The best way that you can care for someone is to desire for them to experience and know the grace and peace of God. *[pause]*

*Our world tries to act like caring about someone looks like just desiring for them to prosper in their physical health or bank account. [pause]*

Our world tries to act like caring about someone looks like affirming all that they do, no matter what.

*But that's not true—the most caring thing you can do is to desire for someone to know and experience the grace and peace of God! [pauseeee]*

If you do not wish someone to experience the grace and peace of God, then you are not truly wanting the best for them.

*You are desiring lesser, more fleeting things for them. [pauseeee]*

We need to reorient how we think to be more in line with Scripture. *[pause]*

*Our greetings should be more infused with the Lord, and our desires for people should be more in line with what truly matters. [pauseeee]*

Do you ever want people to know and experience the grace and peace of God?

*Is that even on your mind? [pauseeee]*

Now what is grace and peace? *[pause]*

Grace is the undeserved kindness of God, and peace is the well-being that God brings to us.

*[pause]*

So Paul is wishing that they would know God's kindness in a deeper way, and experience it more and more as time goes on.

And he is wishing that they would truly know that they have peace with God, but also, that they may experience more peace with others and in their hearts. *[pauseeee]*

What a great thing to want for someone else!

To know and experience the grace and peace that God gives is what we all need. *[pauseeee]*

In our lives that are often feeling the weight and burden of life in this fallen world, what better things could we ask for? *[pause]*

This grace and peace doesn't come to us from some reluctant benefactor, but from "God our Father"...

He cares about us and wants us to experience grace and peace.

And this grace and peace also comes from our Lord Jesus Christ, who is over our lives and knows exactly what we need. *[pauseeee]*

Sometimes I hear someone ask another person, "Hey, where do you get your groceries?" or, "Where did you get that, it looks really good." *[pause]*

They are asking for the *source* of what you have, and similarly, we must remember that the ultimate source of grace and peace is the Lord. *[pause]*

We *must* get grace and peace from Him, and the good news is that He gives it freely and plenteously to those who look to Him in faith. *[pauseeee]*

Do you look to God to know and experience *more* grace and peace? *[pause]*

Have you experienced His grace and peace through trusting in Christ's work on the Cross—that's the first place to begin, if you haven't.

For in grace, He sent Jesus Christ to come to this earth, die on the Cross for our sins, and then rise again.

And through trusting in Christ's redemptive work, we have peace with God. *[pause]*

That's where true grace and peace are found, and the good news is that He continually showers grace and peace upon us everyday thereafter. *[pause]*

Keep trusting Him, keep looking to Him, and keep experiencing His never-ending grace and immeasurable peace.

And desire this grace and peace in the lives of others, like Paul did. *[pause]*

Ask for it, pray for it, wish it, desire it, want it—all in holy affection for one another. *[pauseeee]*

*Just two introductory verses in Ephesians have shown us so much this morning, and the way that Paul writes shows us that...*

### **Our whole lives are bound up in the Lord.**

In just 2 verses of greeting, we were told that Paul's position is by the will of God.

The Christians at Ephesus are saints and faithful because of Christ.

And they receive grace and peace from the Lord. *[pause]*

By, in, and from—all of our lives are bound up in the Lord, who appoints, provides, and is our "all". *[pauseeee]*

Do you think, talk, and live like your whole life is bound up in the Lord? *[pause]*

Do you have a mentality that your whole life comes from, and therefore, should be centered around the Lord, or is your faith some small little part? *[pause]*

These verses remind us that our whole new identity is now 'in Christ', so let's think, talk, and live like it! *[pause]*

Let's not relegate our faith to some box on the side that we pull out when it's helpful, but let's live like saints of God Almighty! *[pause]*

Let's be faithful to Him, through the ups and downs of life, looking to Him for continual grace and peace.

And let's cherish the gifts and positions that He has given to us, making the best use of them, and the best use of the time that God has graciously given to each of us. *[pauseeee]*

To think that this all comes from just the first 2 introductory verses of Ephesians—get ready for a ride once Paul begins the content of his letter.