

Eph. 1:1-2 - It Takes One to Know Some

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Well, Will and I were joking that you now get part two of the sermon. Part one was his announcements, and part two is my portion. Thank you for bearing with us. That's a lot of information to take in.

There's a lot of exciting things happening in this church, and I'm very excited to get to open God's Word with you for the first time in 2015. It's exciting to get to open a book with Will.

A book of the Bible will be looking at Ephesians. Let me offer some things to you as we get started. This is a dangerous promise to make, but I promise that Will and I are going to move at a nice pace through Ephesians.

We're not looking to set any world records on how long we can draw it out. We're not drawing up a two-year plan or anything like that. We promise to move at a good pace through Ephesians.

[0 : 59] We won't be teaching word by word. Rarely will we teach verse by verse, but we'll be looking at section by section, working at a steady pace through what Paul has to teach us through the book of Ephesians.

So I have the privilege then to get to open it for the first time this morning. Here's our game plan as we dive in. We are going to look at the first two verses, and I want to hold to my promise and move through those at a pretty quick pace.

And then we will take a quick tour of Ephesians, look at a few of the highlights and important things that Paul is going to talk about in this book.

If you will turn with me then to Ephesians chapter 1, Ephesians chapter 1 verses 1 through 2, we will be looking at this morning. You can look in your Bibles. If you don't have a Bible, you can look on the screen.

As you turn there, let me remind you or maybe tell you for the first time about some introductory material you need to know about Ephesians. Ephesians was written by the Apostle Paul, as we will soon learn more about.

[2 : 03] It was written between the years 60 and 62 A.D. That is after the death of Christ. Paul writes from imprisonment. Paul writes homebound, imprisoned after multiple missionary journeys, and he is writing to a church that's young, an infant church that needs to be reminded of simple, clear gospel truths.

The book of Ephesians is considered one of the most classic, one of the clearest, most beautiful books about the gospel and how it looks when it's lived out in the lives of believers.

For these reasons, it's worthy of our attention. It's worthy of our care, our careful thought, especially as we look towards a new year, as we enter into a new season as a church, to be bonded together, connected, which is our sermon title, in Christ through the book of Ephesians.

We will return to a few of these pieces of background information throughout our sermon series, so keep those in the back of your mind. Look with me now at Ephesians 1, verses 1 through 2.

They say this, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[3 : 24] Pray with me. Father, these are two short verses. We are beginning a long series, a long journey in a lot of ways into this book of Ephesians, and we need you to meet with us now, to be our guide, to be our helper, to give us your spirit as our teacher to rightly understand and discern your word.

So, Father, may this time in Ephesians not be about me, may it not be about will, but may it be about your Son being known better by these people.

Will you give us the grace, the ability to understand your word now as we consider these first few verses of Ephesians. Pray these things in your heavenly and righteous Son's name.

Amen. It takes one to know one. It takes one to know one is a common phrase in the world that I live in. The world of teenagers is one of, amongst other things, smack talk.

And it takes one to know one is not the coolest phrase, not the most common phrase anymore with teenagers, but you're probably familiar with it. If you don't have teenagers yet, it's coming. If you have them currently, I'm sorry.

[4 : 41] If you've gotten rid of them, I'm sorry to bring back the memories of it. It takes one to know one is key in smack talk. It goes a little something like this. You hear with junior or senior high boys especially, man, you are weak on the basketball courts.

You're not real smart, are you? You're terrible at baseball. Man, you're really short or you're really tall. And then the classic response, it takes one to know one.

To give this line is to say, hey man, you wouldn't know what it's like to be terrible at basketball if you weren't terrible at basketball too. It doesn't just apply to teenage boys, right?

There's positive ways that we would understand this phrase. Men, you are able to connect with other men because you are a man. You understand the frustrations, the challenges, the joys, the highs, the lows of being a man.

Women, likewise, you are able to connect with other women because you understand the joys, the highs, the lows, the challenges, the frustrations of being a woman. It takes a man to know a man.

[5 : 43] It takes a woman to know a woman. Last spring, I got to coach baseball at one of our local schools and I worked with the pitchers. The reason why I worked with the pitchers was because I was a pitcher myself in high school.

It took one to know one. When the players understood that, I went from just being a normal coach to being someone who they could now relate with, who understood them better, who understood the frustrations, the unique challenges that pitchers face.

It took one to know one. Well, the message of Paul to the Ephesians to begin his book is very similar. It takes one to know one, or in the case of Paul in the Ephesians, it takes one to know some.

In these opening verses, Paul is going to introduce himself as one who understands both what it means to be a sinner and what it means to be one who's saved by Christ. Paul leads by telling the people of God in Ephesus that he was once an enemy of God, subject to God's wrath, but now he's been saved by the grace and the mercy of God.

Paul knows what it means to be subject to this wrath, what it means to be an enemy of God because he once was himself. Likewise, he understands the amazing news, what it means to be transformed by the power of the cross, transformed by the power of the Spirit and made into a member of the household of God.

[7 : 06] It took one to know some. The connection that I want to make as we begin this book is that we first understand the implications of who Paul is, why it's important that Paul was the author of this book, why he identifies himself, how he identifies himself to start the book.

He starts by identifying himself as the author by saying that he was an apostle of Christ Jesus. We cannot miss the power, the promise that's contained in these opening words that Paul is an apostle of Christ.

Because for us who understand Paul's story and for the Ephesians who knew his story well, we knew that not long before he wrote this book, he was not an apostle.

He didn't live much like an apostle. He didn't look much like an apostle. He was an adversary against the church. He fought against the power of God.

Paul mocked, scorned, and shamed Christians in the church. He stood in direct opposition to God's mission and was a vile enemy towards Christ. And now, what is he calling himself?

[8 : 15] An apostle of Jesus Christ. I, Paul, who was once an enemy, an adversary towards the Lord, am now an apostle for his grace. Paul's telling the Ephesians that he once was a sinner.

And he's telling them that they need to remember that they were sinners too. He's reminding them of their sinful state even as he highlights his apostleship. Paul can tell them all of these things about being sinners because he was a sinner.

He is a sinner too. Paul will tell the Ephesian people in chapters 1 and 2 about the love of God and how it's expressed in our lives. That through Jesus Christ, our reality, our perspective, our very hearts are changed so that we might become something different.

Not only does Paul identify himself as an apostle, but what else does he say? He says that he comes by the will of God. It's so important for us to understand this as we begin a study in Ephesians of what it means that Paul is writing by the will of God.

He's not addressing the Ephesians as one who's just a faithful follower of Jesus who has some things that he wants to get off of his chest. The value and the significance of Paul's words is based upon his claim of apostleship likened unto the apostles and that his words are connected to the very will of God.

[9 : 39] By making this claim of speaking to the Ephesians by the will of God, he's telling them that contained in this letter is the truth, the spirit, the very divine nature of God himself.

The words of Ephesians are authored by Paul, but they are inspired by the Holy Spirit by the will of God. These words of Ephesians come to pass only because God allowed it to be so.

The book of Ephesians and Paul's authorship of it were ordained to pass because God chose it to be so. He has given it to us because God chose it to be so.

Paul wants us to understand the power of what's contained in these words, that he speaks as an apostle, but he also speaks only by the will of God. Divine truth is contained in this book.

He wants us to understand that he comes as one by and under the authority of God himself. He does not claim or proclaim his name, but rather the name of God.

[10 : 45] So Paul begins by identifying who he is as the author. He next addresses the Ephesians by telling them who they are. And what does he tell them? He tells them that you are the saints, the saints in Ephesus.

It would be easy for us to read over this greeting and understand it as very customary, which it is for the epistles, for letters of the time. But we need to consider the setting, consider the setting of Ephesus.

Ephesus was the capital of Asia. And because of that, it was the political and commercial center of the large region of Asia where it sat. If you know your ancient history, then you know the importance of it also being a major port city.

This meant there was not only great trade and commerce that happened in Ephesus, but there was also a high traffic of people. A high traffic of people meant the confluence of new, bold, challenging, and often very controversial ideas, new philosophies, beliefs about God, about his existence.

Ephesus also had a reputation for being the home of the temple to Diana of Artemis. Diana of Artemis was a God who was believed to have descended down from heaven.

[12 : 02] And a temple was built there to her, and it measured larger than the Greek Parthenon.

The temple was a depository for large amounts of treasure and gold, and it functioned as a bank in many ways.

For those who did business in the temple of Diana of Artemis, the priestesses of Diana were also offered to them. Hundreds of priestesses who were prostitutes.

Their service was offered to those who did business in the temple. And so there, in Ephesus, in the home of Diana, the gospel of Jesus Christ is being interjected.

In the most unlikely of places, the people of God are being raised up. There, by the will and the power of God, the gospel is being introduced and grown through who?

The saints. The saints in Ephesus, into this culture of paganism and sexual immorality, Paul calls out to God's people and gives them this new title, saints.

[13 : 04] Not saints as our Catholic brothers and sisters would perceive, whose merit and obedience was earned, and favor was given to them, and they were given this title of distinction, but saints who are offered the righteousness, the atonement, the holiness of Christ, not of their own works, but only because of God's grace.

There, in Ephesus, they lived. There's a strong contrast that we need to understand. These people should feel out of place when we read the text, if we understand the background of the city of Ephesus.

Don't make all the same connections, but one of the first things that comes into my mind is an Auburn fan living in Tuscaloosa, or an Alabama fan living in Auburn.

Again, don't make all the same connections, but you wouldn't expect to find one in the opposing city, right? You wouldn't expect to find an Alabama fan in Auburn or an Auburn fan in Tuscaloosa. They would be out of place because their loyalties are different. Their preferences, their beliefs, even their systems of doctrine are very different, right? We should understand Paul's call to the saints in Ephesus in a similar way.

[14:16] As readers, it should stick out. It should seem unlikely and unreasonable that the people of God would live in a place like Ephesus. Paul's identification of the people doesn't stop there, though, does it?

His next description of the Ephesians is those who are faithful in Christ Jesus. And what Paul is doing by writing this second half of verse one like he does is to create in the original language a parallelism.

He does this first by describing the Ephesians in their geographical location, but then also describing the Ephesians in their spiritual location, that they dwell in Ephesus, but they also dwell in Jesus Christ.

We can't miss the importance of what Paul is doing here. He's beginning to introduce one of the key and the fundamental principles of the book of Ephesians, and that is the dual citizenship of the people of God.

Paul's not presenting these two locations in contradiction to each other, but rather he's presenting them in conjunction with each other, that our citizenship is dual by its very nature, that we dwell here on earth, that we've been called to bring forth the kingdom of God on earth, but we do so as members of heaven.

[15:26] The people of God are both saints in Ephesus. They're also faithful in Christ in heaven. And so Paul's explaining to the Ephesians and to us as God's people that we are precisely where God would have us, that into a culture of relativity, sexual immorality, all religious, polytheistic, multicultural, spiritually and socially and emotionally starved world, God interjects his people.

He interjects those who represent him, who represent his character, his will, and his love. Not only that, but Paul is relating to the people by telling them, I know.

I know where you live. I understand the challenges, the frustrations, the struggle, the beliefs that are pressed upon you every day. But don't lose heart, Ephesians.

Don't lose heart, Paul says, because your citizenship belongs in heaven. God has called you to live on this earth, to be a citizen of Ephesus, but also you belong to him.

To dwell with God in heaven means the life, the death, the resurrection, and the ministry of Christ are given to us, that we might have renewed hope and renewed life as we live in this world.

[16:45] So Paul identifies who he is, he identifies who the Ephesians are, and lastly, he summarizes what his whole book is going to be about. How does he do it?

By saying, grace and peace. Grace and peace to you from our Lord and from the Lord, from our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace and peace.

That's it. That's the summary. That's the whole spirit of Ephesians wrapped up in two words. Paul's message is contained in these two key principles, highlighting God's power to overcome our sin, highlighting the love that God has to pursue us as his people, highlighting this unmerited favor that God has for us that we can rest in.

Remember, what's Paul trying to do as he opens this book? He's trying to connect himself with these people. The Ephesian church, we said, was young. It was infantile in their faith, and Paul offers them these simple and affirming words, grace and peace to you.

I understand Ephesians. I understand where you live. I understand the struggles that you face. Grace and peace to you. Remember the work that God is doing in your life.

[18:03] We'll find this message of grace and peace throughout the book of Ephesians. It's meant to be this bedrock, this ever-present reminder of God's love and his faithfulness to us.

Paul's explanation of the good news and the reason why our lives should be different is because of grace, because of the peace that we have from the Father. So why should we be excited about Ephesians then?

We've considered the author, we've considered who it's written to in this summary. Let's take a quick tour then, okay? Hold on, we're going to move really quickly. We're going to take a quick tour through the book of Ephesians and consider this new reality that Paul has, how we see grace and peace expressed.

First, we see it expressed through clear gospel truths. Look with me at Ephesians 2, verses 12 through 19. They say this, remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances that he might create in himself one new man in the place of the two so making what?

[19 : 28] Peace and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross thereby killing the hostility. And he came and he preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.

For through him we both have access in one spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

There are clear gospel truths that Paul is going to come back to again and again in chapter 2. This is what we would call Paul's orthodoxy. His right understanding that you were once far off you were once cut off but because of the blood of Christ you've now been brought near.

The wall of hostility that existed between you and the Father has been broken down. And Paul's going to remind us of it affirm us in it encourage us in these clear gospel truths.

These gospel truths are going to lead Paul to a response of overwhelmed prayer and praise. Paul's actually going to be led to sing over us to pray over us as God's people.

[20 : 40] Look at chapter 3 verses 16 through 19 they say this that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith that you being rooted and grounded in love may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and the length and the height and the depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Do you hear Paul's excitement? Do you hear his praise? He can't wait for you to experience the love of the Father. He can't wait for you to experience grace and peace.

We would call this Paul's doxology his expression of prayer and praise and we'll see it in a much fuller sense when we get to chapter 3. Paul will then conclude with two very compelling chapters in his book about what it means for us to respond to the gospel what the gospel looks like in our lives. He'll explain how we are connected together as a body of Christ. Look at chapter 5 verses 1 and 2. They say this, therefore be imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Paul's calling is this that because of the gospel truths and because those gospel truths lead us to praise and worship they ought to also lead us to respond with our hearts and our lives that our lives should reflect the grace and the peace of the gospel that's been offered to us.

[22 : 19] This is Paul's orthopraxy that is his right practice in living that he will explain to us. He desires for there to be change in the lives of Ephesians. He desires for there to be change in our own lives as well.

There will be application to our marriages, to our relationship with our children, to our children's relationship to parents. We will seek unity together as a church as we consider what love looks like, how it unifies us, what it means to be bonded and united to Christ, and we'll also consider what it means to put on what Paul will call the armor of God.

This change in Paul's heart is rooted in the same place that our hearts should be rooted in, the grace and the peace caused by the mercy of God. The response of these new realities is lived out. It's fleshed out according to Paul because of the love and the unmerited favor of God. As we begin our study of Ephesians, we've got to start here. We've got to start with our need for the gospel, our need for God to reveal His grace to us.

For just as God overcame the sinful heart of Paul, all of his anger, all his frustration, his malice, his hatred, his murdering, his slandering, his ridicule, his evilness, and lying, so too did He overcome sinful hearts like mine and like yours.

[23 : 45] This is the hope that we have, that God comes to us surrounded by a pagan culture, plagued by the sinfulness of our flesh, to deliver us from the enemy and to deliver us from ourselves.

Paul's message is this, God has overcome me, and He has come to also conquer you. That's the grace and peace that we rest in. It's where we start. And if we don't understand it, if we don't start there, then we'll miss the power of Ephesians.

Because Paul wants us to see the sinfulness of our own hearts first. And when we face our sin and our inability, it's then that we see the gospel sharply and clearly. Paul tells us that we need not despair.

for when we understand this peace, then we can reflect gospel power. Then we can go and be God's people. If we don't get our hearts right, if we don't have the well of grace to return to as we face our sin, we lose power as God's people in the world.

Listen to what Brian Chappell says about Paul's introduction to the gospel. He says, human weakness, our weakness, is not the end of the story. God is at work so believers can be at peace and keep going in his mission.

[24 : 58] The personal peace that grace provides is the hidden power source of unvanquished ministry. What Chappell is reminding us of is that you and I have a God who comes not from this world but who came from heaven, from the heavenly realms, who enters into our brokenness and our mess.

He redeems us and he empowers us now with unvanquished sources of power to go and carry his gospel forth. We can hope in the power of God because he first performed a miracle in saving people like me and people like you.

So three brief questions then as we conclude and as we look towards this book of Ephesians. The first is this, are you ready to trust the apostle and the work of the Holy Spirit in your life as we consider this book?

Are you ready to trust in God's will, trust in God's power as it's promised by Paul? Don't let these pages just be words, just words on a page.

Are you willing to let these words transform your heart to change and shape who you are in the coming months? Are you open to seeing the gospel in new and beautiful ways in the book of Ephesians?

[26 : 12] Now of course you'd say you're open and willing to seeing the gospel in beautiful ways, right? Well what that means is that before you can see a beautiful picture you've got to see the bad news of the gospel. You've got to see the ugly picture of who you are and you may have to return to it day after day, week after week, but are you desirous of that?

Are you hungry to grow in your understanding of the Father as you grow in your understanding of your sin? You'll see a beautiful picture of Jesus once you first see ugly pictures of yourself.

Paul's going to remind us of it again and again. It took one to know some. The third and final question is this. Are you willing to lock arms together?

To lock arms together as a church and to respond in a variety of ways that Paul is going to challenge us with. He tells us that we're living in a foreign land, that we live in a foreign place surrounded by a variety of new ideas and it's there that the gospel needs to be lived out.

It's out there that the gospel needs to be taken. This connection, this unity is vital to the book of Ephesians. It's vital to us understanding what it looks like to be the church together.

[27 : 28] We don't live on an island. We carry God's mission and his love forth together as a church and that's what Paul is going to advocate for. So are you ready? Are you committed to doing this?

Paul was and he's encouraging us to do the same thing. This is the hope that we have as we enter into the book of Ephesians. As we consider how our hearts, how our minds, how our hands should be engaged with the gospel.

How it should be impacted and changed by the gospel. It all starts here with the hope and the peace. The hope and the peace of the gospel. Paul's introduction to the Ephesians is his introduction to you here.

Grace and peace to you, Southwood. to the saints in Huntsville, faithful in Jesus Christ. Come and hear and respond to the hope that we have in the Father.

Amen and amen. Let's pray. Gracious Father, we are overwhelmed by this good news.

[28 : 36] This good news that you would choose to save and redeem broken, messed up people like us. We thank you for the Apostle Paul who has introduced himself as one who has truly experienced what it's like to be an enemy of God, who is proactive in that, and who longed to see the kingdom of God fail.

That is our hearts, too. Before you changed us, before you intervened in our lives, that was us, too. So, Father, will you work this good news of the gospel, that the story doesn't stop there at our own weakness, but would you work this story into our lives?

Help us to see ways in which we need to change our heart, ways that our mind needs to be changed, and how our lives might reflect your grace more through the work of our hands.

Will you be with us, bless us as we consider this book in the coming months? Father, thank you for your presence and for your word. Pray these things in your heavenly son's name. Amen. For more information, visit us online at southwood.org.