

STUDY OF PAUL'S LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS

STUDY ONE: Ephesians 1:1-2:5

Study One, Part One

¹Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints in Ephesus the faithful in Christ Jesus: ²Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

1:1 – Paul was an apostle of Jesus. What you do, you should do for God first and foremost. While serving people is your focus, Jesus is your reason for serving. If you keep that straight, then when people abuse or ignore you, you will be able to keep on serving. Paul had a clear understanding that while he was serving people, he was really ministering unto the Lord:

In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus (Acts 13:1-4).

1:2 – Paul sent grace and peace to the saints at Ephesus. That wasn't just a religious phrase. **Do you dispense grace and peace wherever you go?** The church is sadly lacking in grace, for fear that it will appear to be "going easy" on sin. At times, that fact has turned the Church into one of the meanest places on earth, where people are saved by grace but maintain their status by works, and expect others to do the same. And God forbid that anyone should mess up. **Can you take the grace message "too far?" Have you taken it far enough where others are concerned?**

Paul started teaching about Jesus right away, directing all attention to Him. Jesus should be the focus for what we all do. I am afraid that too many leaders begin with self and then move to Jesus, if there's time. **Is Jesus the focus for you work, not just in the church, but outside as well?**

1:3 – Paul wrote that in Christ we have been blessed with *every* spiritual blessing. This is not future tense, but past tense! You already have all that you are going to get. You, or anyone for that matter, must be in Christ to receive it all. Not around Christ, not visiting Christ, but living *in* Christ (more on this below in Day 7). We are in Christ like a fish is in the water. "For in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

1:4 – God chose us before the creation of the world. We are only in the first few verses of our study and already I am deeply impacted. God had you and me in mind before He made the heavens and the earth. How’s that for planning ahead? That is why I don’t believe creativity and organization should be at odds with one another. They merge in God and do quite well living together in Him! **Do you tend to emphasize one or the other – creativity or organization – while you have the potential to be both?**

Study One, Part Two

In love ⁵he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

1:5 – As if that’s not enough, we are adopted as sons and daughters. We only become sons and daughters, however, when we put our faith in Christ. Before that, we are vessels of wrath, estranged from God. God is only a Father to those who are in Christ. So Christ is the only means by which anyone can come into right relationship with God, and that relationship is one of a child.

1:6 – Paul returned to the grace theme. The love, spiritual blessings, and adoption are available only in Christ. I often refer to [Colossians 3:3](#), which states: “For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.” If you are *in* Christ, then for something *to* get to you, it must come *through* Him first. God is in control of every aspect of your life, so the grace and blessings are His to bestow freely.

God gives grace freely. **Do you?** Today look for an opportunity to freely give grace, to let someone “off the hook” for something he or she has done. After all, they haven’t sinned against you, but against God. Determine to be a dispenser, not a withholder, of grace, because that is what God is.

1:7&8 – This is the fourth time that “in Christ” is used in the first seven verses. I think Paul wanted the Ephesians to understand that they were in Christ. **Are you abiding in Christ? Are you bearing fruit that would indicate that you are?** Your answer has important implications for your fruitfulness.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in

you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

This is the third time Paul mentioned grace. If you read [Revelation 2:1-11](#), you will learn the Ephesians were a strong church that did powerful works. This strength also became their weakness, for they must have had trouble focusing on grace. Perhaps that is why the Spirit urged them in Revelation to return to their first love.

Do you do strong works but neglect grace? Perhaps not for other people, but do you struggle with grace for yourself? Do you need to forgive yourself for something you did? I suggest you apply grace to your own life.

Study One, Part Three

⁹And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. ¹¹In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹²in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

1:9&10 – Paul used the word “mystery” to refer to God’s work of salvation among the Gentiles in Christ. The mystery here is not some secret doctrine, but rather something that was not seen or understood until Christ came. Once Christ came, Paul went back to the Old Testament and saw that the “mystery” was there all along! The Jews just couldn’t see it and weren’t meant to see it until Christ came to reveal it. Be careful, though, that you not make everything about God mysterious. It isn’t. He clearly revealed His work in Christ, and today that truth is manifest for both Jew and Gentile.

I do not want you to be ignorant of this **mystery**, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in (Romans 11:25).

Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the **mystery** hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him—to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen (Romans 16:25-27).

I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—the **mystery** that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this **mystery**, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:25-27).

These passages clearly indicate that the mystery is no mystery at all. It is clearly revealed that God's work extended beyond the Jews to the Gentiles.

1:11&12 – While God chose us because He loved us, His plan and purpose is fulfilled in us for the praise and glory of Christ. Part of what God did in Christ was for us and part of it was for Himself! Also, God works out everything according to the purpose of His will. God is in charge. You can rest in that fact, even when things happen that you may not understand.

God had a plan for mankind from the time that Adam and Eve fell. Many would say that the gospel was preached in Genesis 3:15, when God revealed that plan:

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

This promise was not for Jews only; that promise was for all men and women. And we now understand that God's plan was for Christ to crush the works of the enemy through His life, death and resurrection. Isn't that simply amazing that the gospel was preached in Genesis! What's more, those who put their faith in that Genesis 3:15 promise were saved!

“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

So this mystery was present, lurking in the background of what God was doing in the Old Testament until the fullness of time, when God sent His Son to set us free!

Study One, Part Four

¹³And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory. ¹⁵For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

1:13 – **Did you realize that when God looks at you, He sees Jesus?** We are included in Christ! That is why He forgives my sins and blesses me with every spiritual blessing. When I put my faith in Christ, He also marked me with the God-housekeeping seal of approval—The Holy Spirit! And this Holy Spirit was promised in the Old Testament.

Just as those who receive a mark of the beast as described in Revelation, the believers also receive a “mark,” and that mark is the work of the Lord in each believer's life that is carried out by God's Spirit. You are a marked man or woman! You stand out because

you have put your faith in Christ and you are sealed in His Spirit, which simply means that God is at work in you to conform you in the image of Christ as you enjoy eternal life in Him.

Most people are concerned for the mark of the beast as described in Revelation, but many don't stop to think that they believers are also "marked." **Do you bear the mark of faith? Would someone looking at your life see your faith as active, vibrant and effective?**

1:14 – This Spirit is a down payment on the promises that will come to pass in the future. Imagine that. The Spirit in you is the deposit paid that guarantees God will do all that He said He will do. You can take that to the bank! That is one of the reasons why you need the Holy Spirit. It is your pledge from God of the good things to come.

Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come (2 Corinthians 5:5).

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ (Romans 8:5-9).

1:15 – Paul had heard about the Ephesians' faith and love. **Have people heard about your faith in God and your love for His people? Do you have a reputation for faith and love? If not, what changes can you make that will bring about this reputation?** We are sometimes too concerned that what we do will draw attention. Forget about that for a season and try to outdo one another in faith and love. What great churches we would have and what an easier time witnessing if we tried to have a public reputation for faith and love.

1:16 – When you build a reputation for faith and love, you create a prayer covering for yourself. People give thanks for you and they pray for you. When I give things away on my website, people write me to thank and bless me, and to let me know they are praying for me. In part, that is because when I give away what I have received, I am building a reputation for love and faith. **Why don't you join me and do the same in your own world with what you have to give?**

Study One, Part Five

¹⁷I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may

know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength,²⁰ which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

1:17 – What a great prayer! If you don't know what to pray at times, then pray the prayers found in Ephesians. Paul prayed that they would receive the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. That's what I want. Stop right now and pray for every person by name that you would like to see receive the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. If you meet regularly with a Bible study or prayer group, then join with someone and pray together. Try to do this three more times today for those same people and others who may come to mind. This truly is a Spirit-led prayer. Spend some time praying a powerful Scripture prayer today! I have a complete list of Bible prayers on my [website](#).

Notice that the goal of this prayer isn't knowledge or wisdom only, but a better understanding and relationship with the Lord! That should be the goal of all that you do and seek: a closer walk with Him. **Is there anything in your life right now that is not contributing to, and perhaps even taking away from, your growth in the Lord? What are you prepared to do about that?**

1:18&19a – Paul's prayer continues, asking that their heart may be enlightened to see three things: hope of your calling, riches of your relationships and great power that is yours. Those things, however, belong only to those who have faith and believe. If you lack hope, rewarding relationships or spiritual power, is it because your faith is limited?

Yet to have those things, God must enlighten the eyes of your heart to see what cannot be seen! Paul wrote about this concept in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18:

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal

What are you fixing your eyes upon these days? Is it the seen or the unseen? The seen will always bring your faith down; seeing the unseen will always help it to grow. The choice is yours, but you will need God's help if you choose to see the unseen. That is why Paul prayed for the Ephesians to have the eyes of their hearts enlightened.

1:19b-21 – The power in us is the same power that raised Christ from the dead. Now that is true power and it is available to you and me! It is not only resurrection power, however, but also *ascension* power. It is the same power that took Christ in His earthly, human state and seated Him at the right hand of the Father. This proves that God is not only able to raise you from the dead but also able to take you to heaven. Remember your

blessings are in Christ. What happened to Him is also available to you! **Are you living in the full potential of this power?** Few of us are. **What implications should this power have for our prayer life, health and productivity?**

Jesus is seated far above everything and everyone in heaven. There is none like Him, nor any that can approach His stature. That is why we are followers of no man, but of Christ. He is our all in all.

You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere men? What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task (1 Corinthians 3:3-5).

Are you a follower of a man/woman, or of Christ? Since you have spiritual leaders, how do you set boundaries so that you don't go too far in following a spiritual leader?

Study One, Part Six

²²And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

1:22&23 – Jesus is the head of everything in the Church. There is no competition. More and more I use all small letters in my email messages, while still capitalizing all references to God and Jesus. It is a small way I can communicate that He is Lord of all. Most importantly for me, He is my Lord! He is everything. I am nothing. Well, I am part of His body. I carry out the will of the Head. The arm does not have a will of its own. It carries out the commands that come from the head. We are the fullness of Christ. He has tied Himself to His people to accomplish His will.

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of

them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body (1 Corinthians 12:12-20).

While we are His body, Paul explained that He is the fullness. What we do, we do for Him and He gets the honor and the glory. **What part of God's body are you in? What role do you have to play? Are you exercising your role under His direction and anointing?**

2:1&2 – Think of your former life. And then reflect on where you are now in Christ. What a difference! It is the difference between death and life. It seems that there are three “philosophies” of life one can follow. The first is to follow the ways of the world, which can be best expressed through the culture of a particular ethnic group, society or country. The second is to follow the ways of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the devil. The third is to live by the Spirit.

It seems that those who have chosen to live by the Spirit can also have times when they follow the other two philosophies. This is why discipleship and training are critical to teach the believer how to recognize the philosophies of the world and the devil. For example, materialism can easily infest the mind of a disciple of Christ. That believer must then learn how to recognize this problem and learn how to be generous and giving while repenting of this thinking.

Do you have any attitudes or beliefs that are contrary to the teachings of Christ and are more consistent with the prince of the power of the air, who is Satan? The only way to be free from those attitudes and beliefs is to allow God's word to change your mind. **Are you in the Word to the extent that you can recognize and repent of these beliefs and lifestyles?**

Study One, Part Seven

³All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. ⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

2:3 – Paul reminded us that we all lived under the bondage of sin at one time. Yet many believers act like they did not. They forget where they have come from. And they also forget that they had to mature and develop to where they are today. When this attitude is present, there is legalism and people can be judgmental. For example, a former smoker can be hard on someone who is still smoking, forgetting what he or she went through to quit. Maturity is not an overnight process.

Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in

the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:21-24).

2:4&5 – Paul reintroduces the grace theme once again. **If you have a Bible concordance, why not take some time to study the word grace as it appears in the New Testament? If Paul talked about grace so much, shouldn't we?** Someone once said that you haven't emphasized grace adequately until someone accuses you of going too far! **How far are you willing to go to preach about and dispense the grace of God?** Grace and mercy are the unmerited favor of God.

For the law was given through Moses; **grace** and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1:17).

The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, **grace** increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also **grace** might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 5:20-21).

But to each one of us **grace** has been given as Christ apportioned it (Ephesians 4:7).

And Paul made sure that we understood that our new life from God was **in** Christ. You may want to look up all the times that the words “in Christ” are used in the New Testament.

It is because of him that you are **in Christ Jesus**, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30).

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession **in Christ** and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him (2 Corinthians 2:14).

For **in Christ Jesus** neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love (Galatians 5:6).

Are you living in Christ, enjoying and celebrating His grace? I hope you are!