

b. The source

One preposition governs the two persons of the trinity mentioned. This obviously demonstrates their total equality, united existence, and joint eternality. Modern attacks on the trinitarian viewpoint must be rejected. Orthodox Christianity upholds trinitarian monotheism. This is not a theological condundrum, but the Word of God.

c. The persons

The "Father" is a reference not so much to the fact that He created the Ephesians and made them like Himself, but that they were born of God's Spirit into His family (John 1:11-13; Gal. 3:26). To believe in a world "fatherhood of God" is high sounding brass, but nowhere can be supported by Scripture as it is popularly proclaimed. The mention of the "Lord Jesus Christ" is critical. The term "Lord" is not a mere honorary title as "Master/Sir." It is the rendering of the Hebrew "Adonai" which means the supreme Lord. It is a reference to Him as owning the incommunicable Name of God. It identifies Him with "Jehovah," the name no Jew would pronounce. He is the Lord of Sabaoth. He is the Lord God. In Him is divine perfection and it serves as the foundation for the dominion accorded to Him. Indeed, no one but no one can call Him Lord in this sense save by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3). It implies an apprehension of the glory of God as it shines in Him. He is God in the flesh and acknowledged as such. While in their living memory he was known as living among them, yet they must never forget who He really is.

Conclusion Here is an epistle which brings peculiar and deep truth to a special group of people. Do you qualify to understand the addressed message? Are you a part of His family? If not, we plead with you today to take your stand with Christ as Lord and Savior. Amen.

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

"The Full Blessing"
Ephesians 1:1-2

Introduction

1. Many consider this to be the greatest epistle written by Paul. It was John Calvin's favorite. John Knox, on his deathbed, read Calvin's sermons on this letter. It was John Bunyan, author of Pilgrim's Progress, who received much of his inspiration from this book for his allegory.

2. This is a letter of high character: a. It is a prison letter, probably from Paul's first Roman imprisonment (3:1; 4:1; 6:20). b. It is a comprehensive letter. The word "all" occurs more than 50 times in the Book. c. It is a doctrinal letter. The kernal of Christian truth is distilled here. It cannot be read without a deep sense of the teaching presented. d. It is a church letter. The body of Christ is in view. It centers on the people of God. While the prophets wrote oracles to the people, Paul gives a classic example of the work of an apostle: a letter to the brethren. This is one par excellence.

3. The opening words of this letter are as profound as the rest of the writing. Dig in and get refreshed with truth which reaches to the heights. It is basic information, but so full and challenging. Here is the start of the whole matter.

1. THE WRITER

a. His name

Paul is the Roman name and Saul his Jewish one. After Acts 13:9, he is always referred to as Paul. He was born in Tarsus (Acts 9:11; 21:39; 22:3) and was of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:5). He had notable kinsmen (Rom. 16:7, 11). His sister is mentioned (Rom. 23:16). His father was a Pharisee (Acts 23:6). His early life was in Jerusalem at the feet of the famous Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). It is this Paul who was used of God to write this letter.

b. His office

Strictly speaking, the word used here means a person sent, a messenger. It was used of a military squadron sent out on an expedition and also of an ambassador. It was used by our Lord (Luke 11:49), of our Lord (Heb. 3:1), and of those sent out by the churches (2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25). Technically, however, it belongs to a special group (Acts 1:15-26). Paul gained this status by divine appointment (Gal. 1:1; 1 Cor. 15:9). His office related to a Person, even our Lord Jesus Christ. He was His emissary.

c. His commission

The will of God is patent (1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Rom. 1:11). Paul was what he was by divine fiat. This gave strength to his authority. It notes the divine origin of his apostleship. He was not arrogant about the matter, but stood in sheer amazement to be an apostle of Christ. It is a grace gift to the church (Eph. 4:11).

2. THE READERS

a. Their name

In the New Testament, the people of God are called "believers, disciples, followers of the way, brethren, Christians." One of the most characteristic designations is "saint." In the Old Testament, the Israelites were saints because they were separated from other nations and consecrated to God. When this concept is applied to the New Testament child of God, it does not mean mere externality, but it indicates one reconciled to God and ceremonially purified (cf. Heb. 2:11; 10:10, 14 for the use of the root verb). A saint, therefore, is one cleansed by the blood of Christ, renewed by the Holy Spirit and as such separated from the world and consecrated unto God. This is what the Ephesians were by virtue of the work of God in their lives. The Roman idea of a special class of people so designated as "saints" is entirely erroneous and unbiblical.

b. Their character

They are called "faithful." While this may be used in a variety of senses, it probably makes reference

to the exercise of their faith, hence equivalent to "believers." It could well mean more: they lived the life of utter reliance upon the Lord. This is what is expected of those who have the Word (1 Cor. 4:1, 2).

c. Their position

They enjoyed living union with Christ (cf. John 15:1-7). The phrase applies equally to the words "saints and faithful." In a true sense, no one can be a believer without being holy and no one can be holy without being a believer. To bifurcate these doctrines is to divide the Word of God and that is heretical. Their spiritual position was "in Christ." It is basic to Christian truth (2 Cor. 5:17). It exalts the believer to heaven itself (Eph. 2:6).

d. Their residence

There is controversy over the legitimacy of the phrase "in Ephesus." The bulk of the manuscripts support the words and their authenticity really should not be questioned. Ephesus was the chief city of Asia and hence probably received the letter first and was entrusted with its safekeeping (Acts 19:10). It appears, however, that the letter was circulated to others also. This came about by the early consideration that Ephesus was not alone meant by Paul, hence it was sent to the saints and faithful "which are." As such, Ephesians is a wide-circulated letter. It comes to us who qualify today.

3. THE GREETINGS

a. The words

Two are used: grace which is the Greek form of greeting and peace which is the Hebrew form. The former relates to God's free favor lavished upon the undeserving. The latter not only speaks of absence of strife, but the presence of positive blessings. It denotes soundness, wholeness, and prosperity, general well being. Here, of course, spirituality is in view first, but physical items cannot be ignored (cf. 3 John 2).