

Date: 11 June 2023

Scripture Passage: Ephesians 1:1-2

Title: Introduction To Ephesians: Basic Christianity

Introduction

- One of the things that you see in the book of Ephesians, perhaps more than any New Testament letter, is an emphasis on the sovereignty of God. That is that God works according to his will. He works all things according to the counsel of his own will.
- **Who wrote this letter?** In the first verse, it says that Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. Born at Tarsus, a seaport and commercial centre in Asia Minor. A strict Jew, but a citizen of Roman Empire. Trained under Gamaliel, became a Pharisee. Full of zeal for the cause of Judaism. Imprisoned Christians. Approved of Stephen's martyrdom. Conscience pricked. Met by risen Lord. Blinded & humbled. Prayed for by Ananias. Became an apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 26:16-18). Forgiven much, loved much (1 Tim 1:15).
- **When was it written?** To these Christians he now wrote, in AD 62. Paul was taken a prisoner to Rome while returning from Jerusalem in third journey. From prison, Paul wrote Philemon, Colossians, Philippians & this letter. Similarity & differences bet. Eph. & Col. Col. to counter false teaching, Eph. prepares for false teaching. Col. emphasis on Christ as Head of ch., Eph. on ch. body of Christ.
- **What this letter is about?** Chapters 1-3 on doctrine. The contents of Christian's heavenly blessing: adoption, acceptance, redemption, forgiveness, wisdom, inheritance, the seal of the Holy Spirit, life, grace, citizenship in heaven. Chapters 4-6 on practice. The Christian's spiritual walk rooted in his heavenly blessings.
- **To whom was it written?** To the believers in Ephesus. Circulated among the churches in province of Asia (Col 4:16). It says in v1 that he's writing to the saints who are at Ephesus, who are faithful in Christ Jesus. And that's where I want us to set our attention today on that state. That he's writing to the Saints who are at Ephesus, who are faithful in Christ Jesus. He's writing to believers at large. This was addressed to the church at Ephesus, and read out loud to the entire church. And this was a circulatory letter. This was passed around to the churches, even as we read it in all of our churches in the New Testament age. Paul is writing to all the saints. And so he's writing to Christians at large.

Basic Christianity (v1-2)

- **What is a Christian?** In v1, in the very way that he addresses the Christians. And that's what I want us to focus on today. What does it mean to be a Christian? What is a Christian? He uses three different defining terms in that first verse. (1) Paul says you are Saints. A Christian is a Saint. (2) Faithful. (3) In Christ Jesus.

We begin with that first term, "every Christian is a Saint". And the first point I would make is The primary need of the church is to realize exactly what it means to be a Christian. The primary need that we face not only in our day, but this is the primary need of the church in any day, is to know what it really means to be a Christian. In fact, I would go this far as to say that every problem that the church has experienced throughout the ages can be traced to our understanding of what it means to be a Christian. What does it mean to be a Christian? For example, is a Christian simply someone who tries to live a good life tries to be a good person. If you say you're a Christian, does that simply mean that you've learned some doctrinal truths about Jesus Christ and that you affirm those things with your lips? Or you've read the New Testament and you believe that Jesus is God come in the flesh, you believe he lived a perfect life, you believe he died on a cross as a substitute for sinners, you believe he was raised from the dead, you believe he's the only way to heaven, You believe that salvation is by grace through faith, and you can affirm all of those things. You believe the great creeds of Christianity, and you Can you believe all these doctrinal truths? Well, does that mean you're a Christian? Is a Christian someone who's gone through certain procedural steps? You say I met with the elder, and I prayed the prayer, and I walked the aisle, and I made my decision public, and I followed the Lord in baptism, and thus I know that I'm a Christian. Is that what it means to be a Christian? As a

Christian, someone who has passed some kind of course. You know, in some church traditions you enter into a course of study at a certain age and when you complete that course of study. The church basically puts its stamp of approval on you, and you're presented to the Church for membership. You are confirmed. Is that what it means to be a Christian? Is a Christian someone who has a tradition? A history with a certain church or with a certain denomination. Someone says, well, I know I'm a Christian because I've grown up a Baptist. I've grown up a Southern Baptist, or I'm a member of the Catholic Church, or I'm a member of this church or that church. And thus I'm a Christian. Is a Christian anyone who's willing to identify themselves as Reformed Baptist? I mean, they're willing to come to the church and they understand what we're about. And they've read the confession of faith, and they've heard what we believe about salvation, and they want to be a part of it. So they must be a Christian, right? This is a vital issue.

Beloved, I say it without any hesitation that many churches today are full of people who believe themselves to be Christians based on many of the things I've just mentioned. And in fact, I would go further and say that there are people gathered or are sitting in their homes this day. Not at the church. In their homes, all around our city, all around our state, all around our country, all around the world who have a measure of assurance about them being Christians because of one of these things. I know I'm going to heaven because I can remember when I prayed the prayer. I know I'm going to heaven. I can remember when I walked the aisle. I know I'm going to heaven. I can remember when I was baptized. I know I'm going to heaven. I'm a Reformed Baptist. How dare you ask me whether I'm a Christian?

What I want to ask is where did we ever get the idea that that is a biblical grounds for assurance? Is that where the Bible teaches us to go when we want to know whether or not we're saved? No! That's not where you go to get your assurance, not the date you prayed the prayer, not the date you were baptized. Not some confirmation process, not joining the church, not your family history. Not what you've done or not done in certain organizations and groups. Not whether you have given this amount of money and served in these areas. That is not where the Bible teaches we should go when we want to know whether or not we're saved. Where did we ever get the idea that these things are what makes us a Christian? And you what the answer is it comes from not really understanding what it means to be a Christian.

So what does it mean to be a Christian? One of the ways that we can escape deception in the area of salvation is when we stop holding on to the title, Christian. And we start looking at the New Testament descriptions of Christians, and we ask, does that portrait look like me? I want to say to you friend, if you carry the title Christian, but your life doesn't match the description of Christians, you are deceived. If you say you're a Christian, but what was true of Christians in the New Testament is not true of you. You are deceived.

So what we must do if we want to properly understand what a Christian is, is we have to take the word of God in its raw form, so to speak. Not watering it down, not shifting it around so it makes us feel more comfortable not emptying it of its meaning. We've got to take these descriptions that we find in the New Testament. Take them just as they are and ask now is that me? And in this first verse he gives us 3 describing terms to tell us what it means to be a Christian.

- **Every Christian is a saint** . We consider today that a Christian is a Saint. He says in verse one, Paul an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God to the “What does it say?” Saints who are at Ephesus, and who are faithful In Christ Jesus. Why does he use this word, Saints to describe these believers? If we want to understand the term Saints, we have to understand. What it doesn't mean?

Number one, let me say this that to be a St. is not what the Roman Catholic Church teaches about sainthood. I'm not picking on the Roman Catholic Church. I want you to understand I'm simply trying to be honest with the scriptures. What the Roman Catholic Church teaches about sainthood is not what the Bible teaches about sainthood. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that a Saint is one who has been designated so by Church

procedure. That is someone who's a Saint is dead, they're in heaven. Many times they've been martyred. And what happens in the Roman Catholic system is someone is Nominated to be a Saint. They go before a Council, they don't go personally. Because they've died. But their name goes before a council. Someone appears before the Council, who argues the merit of this person. They must become a St. based upon meritorious activity while they lived on the Earth. And it must be shown that they were involved in at least one confirmed miracle. A St. according to the Roman Catholic view, as someone who has died, they are in heaven. They have lived a meritorious life here on Earth in some special way. They are involved in one confirmed miracle and they've passed the council. They've been designated as a Saint by the church. Now I want to ask you, does that match what we've? No, these Saints are very much alive, aren't they? They're reading the letter. They're not in heaven. And furthermore, Paul is writing to the entire church, and they're all called Saints.

There's another definition of Saint that we need to get rid of, and that's what we could just call the worldly view of sainthood. Just the common conversation that you hear from men and women as we live in the in the world, if someone says to you, that person is a Saint. What do they mean? It means that person's a really good person. Or when someone says "I'm no St". And what do they mean? Don't try to make me out better than I am. I'm no St. I'm no special person. They are called a St. based upon their personal goodness. But again, I want you to know that's not what we have here. And

If you're a Christian, you're a Saint. 61 times in the New Testament, the term Saints or Saints is used to describe believers. And you take all those references and what becomes clear is that every Christian is a saint. For example, **Read 1 Corinthians 1:2**. He's speaking to believers at large in Corinth and he says you are Saints by calling, you have been sanctified by Christ Jesus, set apart, set apart in Christ Jesus Saints by calling. In 2 Cor 13:13, he writes "all the saints greet you". Now either he was giving a greeting on behalf of people in heaven. That would be the Roman Catholic view. Or he's giving greetings just from the really good people in the church. That would be the carnal, worldly view of sainthood. Or he is saying all the Christians greet you. Which is what he meant.

Let me give you another example from this very book that we're starting to study. Look at **Ephesians 4:11-13**. Talking about why the Lord has ordained these offices in his church, he says he has given pastors to build up the Saints. To equip the Saints, he says in verse 12. ? Are we just equipping people in heaven? Are we equipping just the really good people in the church? The idea is our task is to equip Christians. Then, he says in v13 "until we All attain to the unity of the faith". So again you see every Christian is a St. If you're a Christian today, you're a Saint.

- **Every Saint has been set apart.** Every Christian has been set apart to be faithful in Christ Jesus. The word Saints is translated from the Greek word "hagios" and it means to sanctify or to set apart. To separate. To separate from something to separate to something. A Christian is someone who has been separated by God. Separated, as we saw in first Corinthians 1:2 "by calling". There you were in your lost condition. There you were in your sins. You were a part of a lost and dying world on its way to hell. You were separated from the living God. You were outside the blessing of God. What did the Lord do? He brought the Gospel of His dear son to you. Through declaration, someone witnessed to you, someone preached to you. You heard the word of God. The Holy Spirit brought it to bear upon your heart. And through that God called you. You saw yourself as a Sinner. You understood that the son of God died for your sins on the cross and has been raised from the dead. You saw yourself as needing him, and from your heart with sorrow over your sins and understanding that you were separated from God, you put your faith in the living Christ. And at that moment that calling took place and God saved you. He separated you! He took you out of your spiritual blindness. He gave you spiritual sight. He took you out of your spiritual deadness. He gave you spiritual life. He took you out of a lost and dying world. He puts you into his family and into his Kingdom. God separated you from the world at large. He put you into his special people, his peculiar people called the church. That's what God did. He separated you out. That's what it means to be a Saint. You've been sanctified. You've been set apart.

By virtue of this calling, by virtue of salvation, what has happened is your relationships have changed in two directions. Your relationship to the world has forever changed and your relationship toward God and toward his people has forever changed. Look at **Gal 6:14**. What does that mean? It means that through the work of Jesus Christ through his work on the cross and through the application of that work by the Holy Spirit, God bring you to an understanding of what the cross means, God brings you to faith in his son. And beloved, this is not something you did. This is something God did in you. He so changed you. He so made you different that you can never relate to the lost world as you once did before you were saved and the lost world can't relate to you anymore. God has called us out of the world and made us a part of his family. So that now on by the work of the cross, the world has been cut off from me and I from the world. Jesus said this in Matthew 5:14 when he said you are the light of the world. By virtue of what the Lord has done in your life, when he saved you, you've been made light. You know, God, you know the savior. You know, the way, you know the gospel. By virtue of what the Lord has done in your life, when he saved you, you've been made light. You know, God, you know the savior. You know, the way, you know the gospel. And he goes on to say this in verse 14, "a city set on a hill cannot be hidden". Christians are not meant to just blend into the world around them. You have been saved so as to shine as lights in a dark and dying world.

Jesus said this in John 15:18. Read **John 15:18-19**. God "chose you out of the world". You are saints by calling. Therefore the world hates you. You and I have been made so different that the evidence of our difference is that the world can no longer understand us. Cannot relate to how we think. Cannot relate to how we see things, cannot relate to our priorities, cannot relate to what fuels our passions and drives our lives.

Let's ask the question do you fit the portrait? Has the Lord made you so different by virtue of saving you that the world can no longer relate to you, and in some ways you no longer see the world in the way you once did? Has that happened in your life? Well, let me ask you this way. Has anybody ever hated you because you loved Jesus? Look at verse 20 of John 15. "Remember the word that I said to you. A slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will keep yours also". Does your life so clearly shine forth Christ that you are loved by the people who love him, and you are hated by the people who hate him? Jesus said in Matthew 5:11. "Blessed are you when men cast insults at you and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely on account of me. Rejoice and be glad for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you". The fact that you are so different from the world that you are a troubling influence to those who hate Christ. Don't you understand that as an evidence that God has in fact saved you, that you are a Saint. You're not of this world, though you're in it. You're a Pilgrim passing through, and your home is heaven. And you're a shining light in the midst of this Dark World. You are the salt of the earth. And salt is not only a preserving influence, it is a stinging influence. When you put it in a wound. That's who we are.

- **Every Saint has been cleansed.** This word means to sanctify, to set apart. When you were going to sanctify vessels for use in the temple, for example in the Old Testament. It involved cleansing. It involved a ceremonial cleansing. Those vessels would be set apart. They were regarded as Holy instruments. They were not to be defiled. When the Lord calls his Saints, when the Lord saves someone through faith in his son, he does a cleansing work in them. Every St. has been cleansed.

You've been cleansed in two ways. Number one, you've been cleansed from the guilt of sin. What was it that separated us from God when we were born into this world? Sin! Sin is a great gulf between a human being and God. No one grows up a Christian. No one grows up praying. No one grows up loving God. The Bible says we're born into this world, separated from a holy God. And the gulf is so great that there's nothing we can do to close that gap. You may never bridge the gap by your works. No amount of religious activity can bridge that gap. God has told us in his word how there can be reconciliation between a holy God and sinful man, and the answer is the cross of Jesus Christ. God came in the form of a man. He came taking to himself a sinless human nature. The God man lived on this earth without sin. Thus he did not deserve to die. He died on a cross as a

substitute for sinners like you and I. He died in our place. And his precious blood that was spilled out is of sufficient value and of sufficient cleansing power to forgive all of our sins. And three days later, he rose from the dead demonstrating that he is who he claimed to be. Demonstrating that the father accepted his payment. And he's ascended to the right hand of his father. And now he brings salvation to people through the work of the Holy Spirit.

When the word of God is shared, people hear the gospel. The Holy Spirit wakes them up from a dead, and opens blinded eyes, opens deaf ears. And people see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. They see themselves to be sinful, they see themselves to be lost and unable to do one thing to fix the problem. And they must look away from themselves, to the Son of God. And when God grants them faith and they reach out with the faith God gives them, and take hold of the son of God. Jesus saves them. He washes away all their sins. All past all present, all future, all forgiven. And God then takes all the perfect righteousness of his own son, and he imputes it to our spiritual account. He puts it on our credit so that now when God looks at us, he says you are clean . But more than just clean, you are holy. That's what it means to be a Saint. In the sight of God. We are a peculiar people taken out of the world, brought into God's family, not by anything we've done, but based on God's grace alone.

Now the Lord didn't take all the sin out of you. The flesh is still there. There's still a sin principle within you. But God has forever in your life, changed your relationship to sin. No longer is any Christian a slave of sin. Every single believer has been set free. And every single believer has been changed on the inside.

This is the truth that we have to take hold of. We have so stressed salvation by grace through faith alone, which we should stress. We have so stressed the positional elements of salvation that we have forgotten the experiential elements of salvation. When you and I were saved, the Lord didn't just take our name off a roll going to hell and put our name on A roll going to heaven. He did something more than that. He didn't just change our status, he changed us. He made us a new creation. Something went on on the inside of us that has forever changed us and our relationship to sin, our relationship to God, our relationship to God's people, and our relationship to the world. You can go to a million Bible study classes, but unless you've experienced the new birth, you'll never be able to apprehend, comprehend and rejoice in the scriptures. You'll hear all the teaching, but it won't ever make sense. When the Lord saves someone, He gives them the capacity to understand Scripture. That's a lifelong journey, and the Lord will be at work in our lives, changing our thinking and and teaching us and growing us and maturing us. But the very instant you're call the Saint, the very instant you're saved, you now have this new capacity. To understand truth.

Jonathan Edwards in his book Religious Affections, makes the case that you can't separate the will from the heart. You cannot separate your actions from your affections. These two things are tied together. What you really love, you choose. We're living in a day where we've separated these things in our thinking. People say I love God and yet they don't love his bride the church. They say I love the people of God, but they don't love his church. They say they love the word of God, but they don't come to be taught. We're living in a day when people can believe that they love God, but they come to church once a year. Or they don't come at all. You'll know what you love by what you choose! And when the Lord saves someone, he gives them holy affections. A love for him, a love for obedience, a love for his word, a love for his people, a love for his church, a love for service, a love for ministry. God gives us a love for holiness, and a hatred for sin.

None of us will ever be perfect on this side of glory and in any of these areas. But the moment the Lord saves someone he so makes them different. That they begin a pursuit in all of these areas. And for the rest of our lives, we are a different people, becoming more and more holy. This is a biblical definition of a Christian, someone who's a Saint. Someone who's been set apart and someone who has been cleansed. And they're being cleansed as they're being sanctified.

- **Every church is an assembly of Saints.** What is a church? Is it simply an organization? Is it a building? Is it a club or a group that someone just decides to join? If you look at what's going on in our churches today, you would really think that the church is just a group and we're doing our best just to get people to belong to the group. And that our joy comes when people simply want to belong to the group. Do you think that's what a church is? Do you think there's rejoicing in heaven when we hit our attendance goals? The church's health and vitality is not measured by how many people occupy the seats on Sunday. If it is, then there are people who are in false doctrine that are healthier than we are. No, that's not the measure. The church is God's family. The church is an assembly of Saints. And ideally, no one should ever belong to a local church who has not been changed in the way we've just seen described. Called out, made different, born again, given new affections. That's the church.

We need to understand the city of Ephesus. It was a lot like Boston. The City of Ephesus was a metropolitan city of its day. It was a River City not far from the coast. Lot of commercial activity there. Merchants would come there. It was known for its business. It was a wealthy city. Successful from a financial standpoint. It was also a wicked city. Sexual immorality was woven into all of their temple worship. Now here is Almighty God. And he's going to send a letter. To his world. Who's he going to send it to? Is he going to send it to the business leaders of Ephesus? Is he going to send it to the political leaders of Ephesus? Is he going to send it to the wealthy in Ephesus? Maybe because it was a wicked city. Maybe he'll just send it to the really good people in Ephesus. No, he says to the Saints. God is going to put his word into the hands of his people, whom he has changed by his grace. And then he's going to use these people with his word in hand to turn their world upside down. He's going to turn the world upside down because of the quality of the life that they live by his grace. That's what it means to be a Christian. Not I've been a Reformed Baptist all my life. Not I walk the aisle and pray the prayer and enter the baptistry. Not I was confirmed. No! The living God brought the gospel to my ears one day. And the Holy Spirit gave me eyes to see when I couldn't see before, and ears to hear when I couldn't hear before, and a heart that opened to Jesus when it wasn't open before. And I saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. I understood him to be my only hope. I was lost and undone. And with the faith God gave, I took hold of his son. He made me a new creation. He gave me new affections. My life has never been the same since. By the Cross of Christ the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. And some love me who love God and some hate me who hate him. But one thing that cannot be ignored, one thing that cannot be denied is that **we are God's light**. That's what it means to be a Christian. That's what it means for the church, to be the church. I want to ask you this my friends. Are you a Saint? Have you been separated out? Have you experienced a new birth? Has the Lord called you? Have you placed your faith in Christ?

If this does not describe you, turn now from your sins and trust in Christ finished work on the cross. His grace will give you peace.