

# Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ephesians 1:1-6

## Introduction

Paul the apostle was in prison for the word of God when he wrote this letter. The Ephesians were a special focus to Paul. He had spent considerable time with the believers there and experienced tremendous success in ministry among the Ephesian people. (See Acts 19) When traveling back to Jerusalem at the close of his third missionary journey, Paul called for the elders of the church in Ephesus and gave them parting instructions.

*He said, "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'*

*And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship." Acts 20:18-38*

As you can see, Paul was concerned about the Ephesian believers being negatively affected by savage wolves who would come in among them. He was also concerned about the men who would rise up from among them speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after themselves.

This church like all others needed to be warned about these evil workers, and prepare themselves for the spiritual battles we all face. In addition, like all believers, the Ephesians needed to be encouraged in their love for the Lord and to remain focused on Jesus, remembering the glorious work He did to save and seal them for Himself. Therefore, this letter is a reminder of God's great love for us and an exhortation to walk in the grace He has provided every one of us.

The Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ shows us that the Ephesians did not fully embrace what Paul was reemphasizing to them in the introduction of this letter. Paul did remind them that the salvation they enjoyed was all of God and that it was God's good pleasure that motivated Him to save. This fact should have made the Ephesians (and all others) genuinely thankful and genuine

worshippers. However, as we read in the Revelation they fell short of fully grasping the important lesson contained herein. We read, “To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, ‘These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: “I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.” Revelation 2:1-5

The removal of the “lampstand” (candle) referenced above indicates that the testimony the Ephesians were demonstrating was non-desirable. Therefore, He was indicating that He would cease to use them unless this was rectified. Although the Ephesians were saved, they needed a revival of love for the Lord. We too may learn from this lesson. Our testimony is important, and remembering all God has done for us will motivate us in our love and obedience to His will.

### *Ephesians 1:1–2 (NKJV)*

*“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Paul begins his letter by pointing out that he was chosen and commissioned as an apostle by the will of God. He writes to the Ephesian believers, and as appropriate to his usual mannerisms, blesses them with the grace and peace available only in Jesus Christ our Lord.

The early Church had made necessary that an apostle was an eye witness to the resurrection of Jesus. This made Paul a peculiar apostle since his eye witness experience came by special revelation later via the Lord Himself.

Paul (Saul) was not a believer in Jesus until later in the first century. In fact, a careful read through Acts 7–9 will review his early rejection of Jesus and then his conversion experience.

The account of his experience with the resurrected Christ can be pieced together by reading the above passage (Acts 7-9), as well as Acts 22-23, 26, 1 Corinthians 15, 2 Corinthians 12, and Galatians 1.

Paul was “sent” to the Gentiles. The word Apostle simply means “sent one.” Therefore, even though we now have no “eye witnesses” to the resurrection of Jesus in the present hour, we do have those who are called and chosen to be “sent ones.” Many of our present day missionaries fit this definition.

Later in Ephesians we will read that God Himself gave, *“some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”* Ephesians 4:11–13 (NKJV) Therefore, since we are still living in the Church Age, we know there are still “apostles” today; for this we can be thankful.

*Ephesians 1:3–6 (NKJV)*

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.”*

Paul begins by reminding the Ephesians (and all of us) how great the Love of God is toward us. This is delineated when he says, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”* This first phrase is intended to point us in the direction of thankfulness for all the Lord has done for us.

As believers we are the foreknown to God. As foreknown we are the chosen – in Christ. It is not possible for God to “not know” the future. Therefore, from before the foundations of the world, God *“predestined...to adoption”* all believers, and declared that we would be *“holy and without blame before Him in love.”* (For extensive notes on “Predestination and Foreknowledge” see <http://candlelight.org/what-we-believe/discipleship/various-articles/predestination-foreordination/>)

The fact that God, from *“before the foundation of the world,”* intended to save those who trust Jesus for salvation, points to the fact that the salvation we experience is not an afterthought or “Plan B.” God, *“according to the good pleasure of His will,”* and *“to the praise of the glory of His grace...made us accepted in the Beloved.”* This should bring encouragement to each of us. God, knowing all things from before the foundations of the world, all about who we were and are, all we would or will ever do, from the greatest to the smallest sin, nonetheless desired to save to the utmost all who come to Him by faith alone, through grace alone, in Christ alone. This fact brings great joy and peace – especially when we fall short or even intentionally and rebelliously resist Him. This does not suggest we should resist Him, but if we do, the “resistance” is likewise foreknown by the God who previously desired to save us in spite of us. Hallelujah! He has made us *“accepted in the Beloved.”*

Furthermore, God has made it possible that we should be *“holy and without blame before Him in love.”* This too should bring the greatest encouragement to the believer. Simply stated, this means that when we stand before the Lord we will be *“without blame”* and recognized as *“holy.”* Believers do not need to fear standing before the Lord because we do not stand before Him in our own righteousness. We stand before Him in Christ – as the righteousness of God in Him! *“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”* 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV)

**Read:** Acts 7, 8, 9, 19, 22, 23, 26, 1 Corinthians 15, 2 Corinthians 12, and Galatians 1.

Word Wise: Apostle – “Sent One”

## Questions

True or False: An apostle is a sent one!

In Ephesians 1:2 Paul sends his greetings to the believers with the blessing of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

True or False: Grace and peace come to us through our Lord Jesus Christ.

True or False: Every believer should provide blessing and praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing.

True or False: We should get some of the praise. After all, we chose to believe in Jesus.

True or False: The “heavenly places in Christ” Paul refers to is heaven.

True or False: God choose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before Him in love.

True or False: Love motivated God to plan for our redemption in Christ from before the foundation of the world.

True or False: Because God is love, He chose everybody – even those who refuse to believe.

True or False: God, who cannot learn, foreknew all those who would trust Jesus for salvation.

True or False: Believers are predestined “to adoption as sons and daughters” through our Lord Jesus Christ.

True or False: God, according to His own good pleasure, chose to adopt us.

True or False: God has freely given us grace in Christ.

True or False: We have redemption through Jesus’ blood and the forgiveness of sins, if we keep on confessing every mistake we make and try not to make any more mistakes.

True or False: Believer will make mistakes.

True or False: Righteous living should be the testimony of every believer.