

# Ephesians 1:1-2

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/eph/eph-1/ephesians-11-2/>

*Paul begins this letter by greeting the faithful believers in Ephesus and asks God to give them favor and peace.*

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, writes to the Ephesian church. Paul is an apostle, which means he is an ambassador sent by Christ (the Messiah, the “Anointed One”) Jesus. It is by the will of God that Paul is an apostle. He was chosen specifically by Jesus on the road to Damascus when he once persecuted believers, but was blinded by a vision of the glorified Jesus, and called upon to preach the good news of Jesus’s death and resurrection (Acts 9:5).*

It is thought that *Paul* wrote this letter (or “epistle”) to the *saints who are at Ephesus* in the early ’60s AD while he was imprisoned in Rome. The *saints* (“holy ones,” “set apart”) are the Ephesian believers in Jesus. All believers in Jesus are born anew into God’s spiritual family, where they are secure as His children forever. These saints are also those *who are faithful in Christ Jesus*. They are not only set apart for service to God, they are being *faithful* to walk consistent with their calling.

Paul extends his typical blessing and greeting to them: *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*. The word translated *grace* means “favor.” In this instance, Paul is praying that God will show His favor upon the Ephesian believers. Since no one can ever cause God to owe anything to anyone, it is always appropriate to pray for God’s mercy in granting His favor (2 Timothy 1:16).

Paul first came to Ephesus with Priscilla and Aquila after departing from Corinth where they had lived for a year and a half (Acts 18:19-21; see map on side bar ). Paul’s time in Ephesus was brief, though he left Priscilla and Aquila behind to start a church. He departed, saying, “I will return to you again if God wills” (Acts 18:21). God did will it, for Paul returned to Ephesus during his third missionary journey. After passing through Galatia and Phrygia to check on the churches established there, he came back to Ephesus where he would remain for 2 years and three months, teaching and persuading people about the gospel, and adding believers to the churches there (Acts 19:1-10). If Paul wrote this letter while imprisoned in Rome, it would have been after this second visit, where he remained for some time.

Ephesus was an impressive, important city during the Roman Empire. A huge city of commerce and banking. In this epistle, Paul talks about the spiritual riches and inheritance we have in Christ, contrasting the physical riches of Ephesus, which was known as the financial and banking center of that entire region.

There was a major theater in Ephesus which could seat around 25,000 people, as well as the library of Celsus, one of the largest libraries of that period, demonstrating the city’s prosperity. But most importantly, and relevant to Paul’s experience in Ephesus, was the temple of Artemis

(a Greek goddess, known as “Diana” to the Romans). This temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

A silversmith, Demetrius, was opposed to the gospel because it undermined his business, which was to make and sell silver shrines of Artemis. Since Paul and the believers in Christ were spreading the truth that there was only one God, and Artemis was only an idol, Demetrius was losing business. He rallied the smith guilds of Ephesus against Paul, saying,

“...this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all. Not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be regarded as worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the world worship will even be dethroned from her magnificence.”  
(Acts 19:26-27)

Thus the smiths started a riot that filled up the Ephesian theater, dragging some of Paul’s co-ministers with them, chanting, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” Paul was kept away from the theater by his friends and government officials. Ultimately the riot came to nothing, and one of the city clerks advised Demetrius and his disgruntled colleagues to make their complaints known through the legal system, not through a riot (Acts 19:28-41).

Soon thereafter, however, Paul left Ephesus for Macedonia (northern Greece) (Acts 20:1).

Eventually, Paul’s protégé Timothy served as a teacher and shepherd in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3).

Church tradition says that the Apostle John, who wrote the Gospel of John, 1, 2, & 3 John, and the Revelation was there as a leader as well. John was eventually exiled to the Isle of Patmos, which is situated in the Aegean Sea, not far from Ephesus in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). There on Patmos, Jesus would visit John in a vision, showing him the end times, which John would write down as the book of Revelation. Early on in the book of Revelation are brief letters to various churches from Jesus, and one of these churches was the Ephesian church, to which Jesus says,

“But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent.”  
(Revelation 2:4-5)

During his final visit to Ephesus, Paul warns the elders there that false teachers are coming:

“I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.”  
(Acts 20:29-30)

Based on the letter to the church at Ephesus in Revelation, they did an excellent job of resisting false teachers (Revelation 2:2-3). But Ephesus was warned that their influence would be removed if they did not restore love to their stand for truth. By the third century, the church of Ephesus is no more. This letter remains, and in it Paul unpacks a thorough explanation of how the Trinity of God works together to save us from sin to eternal life, the great riches and hope which God promises for us as an inheritance, how believers ought to live now that we have new life in us, now that we have the power of God in us through His Spirit, and how we can overcome the enmity of Satan and our old man, our sinful flesh.

### **Biblical Text**

**Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: <sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**