

Introduction to Ephesians

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[0 : 00] The New Testament has a number of letters that were written by various authors, most of them written by the Apostle Paul, and this is one, and one of my favorites, not my, the favorite.

Philippians is my favorite letter in the New Testament. But Ephesians is a tremendous letter. So what we're going to do, just by way of introduction, and as is the case with a number of the letters in the New Testament, we can introduce these letters by just looking at the first few verses.

So that's what we're going to do here tonight. And so let me go ahead and read it, verses 1 and 2. I provided the text there in your notes, or you can look at your Bibles. Of course, the version that I'm using is the New King James Version.

And so here is how that reads. It's 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. All right, so there's the opening to the letter. It is somewhat standard. You'll find something similar in nearly all of Paul's letters.

[1 : 46] And probably to some extent is standard for letter writing of the day. And yet, because this has been inspired by the Holy Spirit, then we have every right and every authority to look at every word of this, quote, salutation to the letter and understand that there's something here that God wants us to learn.

Now, that's true. And also at the same time, it does help serve as a kind of introduction to the letter. It tells us a lot about the letter that we're going to be studying as we go along for the next several weeks.

All right, so that's what we'll do. The first thing that we want to consider is that we're going to be studying as we go to the letter. And I put kind of a bare outline in your notes. This is not exhaustive, not including everything that I plan to say here tonight, but it kind of hits the high spots.

And you can kind of follow along, fill in the blanks. That way I know that you stay engaged. Of course, this group is always engaged. You know, none of our minds wander in this room on Wednesday nights because we're the real serious Bible studyers.

And I'm not saying that tongue-in-cheek. I really believe that. And so, but anyway, you can kind of follow along and fill in the blanks. The author of this letter is who?

[3 : 17] Paul, of course. And there's really very little debate about that. How do we know that Paul is the author? And you're thinking, well, that's a pretty stupid question.

Because Paul's name appears right there at the beginning of the letter, doesn't it? In fact, in the Greek text, *palos* is the very first word of the text.

And so, that's how it's translated for us in most versions. And so, all right, obvious right on the face of it, Paul is the author.

And it's pretty easy. You know, we don't have to talk a lot about this, though I do want to say a few things about it. It is pretty universally accepted that Paul is the author of this epistle, the epistle of Ephesians.

And certainly, all conservative scholars agree on that point. I'd be really surprised if any conservative, Bible-believing, those who hold to the inspiration of Scripture would doubt at all that Paul was the author of this letter.

[4 : 32] So, there's no debate in those circles. The only exception, not among conservatives, the only exception to the authorship of this book would come from liberal scholars.

Liberal scholars, and there has been some debate about that, though not as much in recent years. More so, back in the late 19th to 20th century, and the advent of liberalism, or what's called theological liberalism, that really was a gift to us, our country, from the Germans.

German Bible scholarship. And, you know, guys like Bultmann, and Bellhausen, and Schliermacher. You've heard of these guys, right? And, you know, and then there are many others. And so, you know, German theology, theologians in the late 19th century certainly began to take a different view of Scripture, the nature of Scripture, and their denial of Pauline, or Pauline. I'd rather use Pauline, because Pauline sounds like a woman's name, doesn't it? Although it's normally pronounced Pauline, Pauline authorship. Anyway, their denial of Paul as author to the book was based primarily on an approach to biblical, approach of biblical analysis known as higher criticism.

[6 : 01] Now, you may never have heard of that. Higher criticism as opposed to lower criticism. Higher criticism is an approach that is very rationalistic when it comes to interpreting Scripture, making decisions about the authenticity of various parts of Scripture.

It's a very, kind of a secular approach, and rational, or human reasoning kind of approach, rather than, what would be the other? Spiritual, but technically divine revelation.

So, looking at Scripture, then, from two different perspectives, that it is a man-written book, and so, because man wrote it, then we have a right to analyze it and criticize it and find mistakes or find discrepancies and take the supernatural out of it and on and on it goes.

In fact, really, quite frankly, at the core, at the foundation of higher criticism is the belief in evolution, another system of thought that came out of Germany.

And so, they just simply applied those kind of techniques of those kinds of principles to Scripture as well.

[7 : 26] And so, Scripture was kind of in a state, was in a state of evolution, and man was in a state of evolution. So, they look at all of it in that way, and so, they look at it very rationalistically, and instead of focusing on the divine revelation of Scripture, in fact, coming to the point where they out and out deny divine revelation or divine inspiration.

So, they denied Pauline authorship of Ephesians based upon primarily the style of writing. So, they look at the book, the letter to Ephesians, they notice the style of the writing, and they compare that with other letters that Paul wrote, and they see some changes, some differences, and so, they come to the conclusion, well, Paul probably didn't write it.

Alright? So, that sounds like a reasonable, very scientific, very methodical approach to interpreting Scripture. The only problem is, the Bible says Paul wrote it.

So, when you approach the text, and you disregard something that's in the text, then what are you doing? You're denying the divine inspiration of the text.

And so, higher criticism then really comes out of a low view of Scripture, as opposed to a high view. Now, I have a high view of Scripture.

[8 : 46] It's inspired of God. And every word is inspired, and therefore, authoritative, therefore without error, and on and on, we could go. So, that said, and we could really go off into the tall weeds on the subject of higher criticism, and some of the philosophies that have come out of the higher critics and the 20th century liberal theology and so forth.

The plain reading, here's the bottom line, the plain reading of Scripture indicates that Paul himself wrote the letter to Ephesians, the letter that is ascribed to the Ephesians.

And so, that is what the text says in verse 1, Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God to the saints. Now, that identifies the author.

Paul, an apostle, you know, and he's an apostle in a different way than the original 12. Apostle by the will of God, and he's writing to the saints.

So, since we believe, or should believe, that every word of Scripture was given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, alright, is that settled in your mind? That's settled in my mind.

[10 : 03] Since we believe that, and then, therefore, the next step is to believe that Scripture is divine in its origin. It goes without saying. Therefore, Scripture is without error.

And therefore, we must believe that Paul wrote this letter because that's what the text says. And I've said a lot about something that ought to be very obvious and maybe doesn't need any explanation, but at least maybe we should know that not everyone agrees with that and now know why they don't and kind of the direction they're coming from.

And it is primarily a very rationalistic approach to interpreting Scripture and is based upon a very low view of Scripture in regard to its inspiration.

Alright, now, what do we know about Paul? Now, this is not something we're going to learn from the first few verses of the chapter or of this book and not really even anything that we might learn from the book itself, from the letter itself, but I just thought it would be good to kind of do a little rundown of Paul.

Most of this you already know, but this kind of puts it all together. Paul's original name was what? Saul, of course. And he was an Israelite, a Jew, right?

[11 : 24] Yeah. Of the tribe of Benjamin. And we learned that from Romans 1.11. Paul informs us of that himself.

The speculation is that he was probably named Saul after Israel's first king, whose name was Saul. Saul, and who was also a Benjamite. Alright, so that makes sense.

Probably a lot of little boys born in the tribe of Benjamin who were named Saul. Not because he was a great king.

He really wasn't. He was a pretty pitiful king. In fact, it's often made me wonder why anybody would want to name their child Saul. There was no mystery to the Jews.

There were plenty of... I mean, they had the books, you know, the Old Testament. They knew about Saul and so forth. But anyway, that's probably where his name came from. Paul was highly educated.

[12 : 26] Very educated. And trained also in the rabbinical traditions or studies under the famous Rabbi Gamaliel.

And Acts 22.3 tells us that. And he was a very famous rabbi, teacher of the day. And since he then sat under Gamaliel, then that meant that Paul was trained in what was called the Hillel school. I don't know if I put that in your notes. Did I put that in your notes? Well, you have to write that down. Not that it's going to really be that big of a deal. But the Hillel school, and it was called that because it was named after Gamaliel's grandfather, who was Hillel the elder, famous Jewish leader, or teacher, rather.

And the Hillel school, what we know about is that we know that that meant that Paul was well-educated in a number of subjects. Not just educated in Scripture, the Old Testament Scriptures, but also probably had a strong depth of knowledge rather in Greek culture and history and familiarity, great familiarity with Greek philosophers and so forth.

And that kind of is revealed to us in the book of Acts, in Acts 17. Remember when Paul had a conversation, dialogue, with the Greek philosophers and Greek high muckety-muck there in Athens.

[14 : 02] And he talked to them about the Stoics and he talked to them about the Epicureans. And he had a vast knowledge even quoting some of their famous philosophers there in his sermon to the Athenians.

So he had a depth of knowledge, not just in the Bible, but in many, many other subjects. In fact, you could say, I guess, that his education was generally the humanities in general, and he was quite educated.

Paul was a Roman citizen. That's important. And if you, you know, read through the book of Acts, you know that became a pretty important thing for Paul at one point when he was arrested.

And they couldn't just summarily put him to death or execute him. And he informed them that he was a Roman citizen. And that struck fear in their hearts.

Now he was, not all Jews were Roman citizens. In fact, it was something unusual. And he was by virtue of his father. And so he was a Roman citizen, Acts 16, 37.

[15 : 10] Paul was a Pharisee. And we know that, don't we? A member of the Sanhedrin, which was a very prestigious kind of position to hold.

The Sanhedrin being the ruling council in Jerusalem, ruling council of the Jews, Acts 23, 6. Paul, prior to his conversion, was an active persecutor of the church, persecutor of Christianity.

Very active, very zealous in his persecution of the church. Paul even said so of himself. He was very zealous to stamp out this threat to Judaism.

These upstarts, these radicals, and these blasphemers. I think he really believed they were blasphemers. And so he set out to annihilate them.

In fact, in that passage in Acts 22, 4, he said he was zealous to the point of death, not his own death, their death. And he imprisoned many of them. And which then leads us to, well, first let me mention the name, which is interesting.

[16:24] Paul had two names, didn't he? Paul was Saul, and Saul was his Hebrew name. Hebrew name, but also Paul.

Now, we're not, it's a little unclear, and Scripture doesn't really give us any specific details as to when he started to be called Paul. Luke, when he wrote Acts, in Acts 13, 9, gives us the first time that Saul was called Paul.

This was quite some time after his conversion, so we don't know when they started calling him Paul. Paul is his Latin name, and why would he have a Latin name?

Well, he was a Roman citizen. That's why he had a Latin name. So he had a dual, dual name, Saul, Paul, and of course the Latin and the Greek are very close together in their pronunciation.

Paul was saved, of course, during his journey to Damascus. And why was he headed to Damascus? He was headed there to arrest Christians. He had, you know, authorization papers, you know, I guess, warrants, I guess we would call them here, warrants for their arrest.

[17:40] Christ. And so that's where he was headed when, of course, he met Christ on the road. Met him in person. Jesus met Paul there on the road, Acts 9, 1 to 8.

Paul was then, after his conversion, was trained for three years. That is, Paul went to seminary. Not like any seminary I've ever attended, or anyone here has ever, in any ministry today has ever attended.

It was, seminary did last three years. That's the typical length of a seminary education. And so, I guess maybe that's where we'd get that today. You've got to have three years, though I think it took me a little longer than that.

But, three years, and where was the seminary held? The backside of the desert somewhere. And, though, probably very close to Damascus, and we get that from Galatians 1.17.

And who was his professor? The Holy Spirit was his professor. Now, that would give a person a pretty good seminary education. You know, the Holy Spirit taught him directly.

[18:49] Paul was one, and he did have other teachers, by the way, did have others in the leadership of the church that also helped Paul. Paul was one of the pastors of the church at Antioch.

they're named there for us in Acts 13.1. I think there are five of them. Four or five. And so, initially, he was one of the elders, one of the pastors, a plural eldership of the church at Antioch.

But, shortly after that, Paul, along with Barnabas, was commissioned and sent out by the Antiochian church to be missionaries, to be the first church planters.

and I don't think that there's ever been, since then, a missionary, church planter, preacher, evangelist, like the Apostle Paul.

So, for me, it's Acts 13.2 where we understand that. Paul became God's first missionary to the Gentiles. We know that, don't we? Acts 9.15, Romans 11.13, Paul gives testimony to that.

[19:55] And, so, you know, just a little bit of information about the writer of this letter. And, I kind of, though you're probably familiar with all of those various steps in Paul's journey, it kind of puts it all together for us.

And, when you do that, when you put it all together like that, just step by step to see God's hand in his life, where Paul was and where God brought him, it's a pretty amazing story. of course, you can go back and flesh all that out and fill in some of the blanks and an incredible thing that God did in Paul's life.

Alright, so second, then, to whom did Paul write this letter? And, we don't have to speculate. It's not something you have to, you know, look internally into the letter itself and try to make some decisions, whether he's talking about, you know, referring to believers or addressing believers or if he's addressing, at this point, non-believers.

We can find out right at the very beginning of the book, the beginning of the letter, who he wrote to and he gives a three-fold description of his intended readers.

And, it's all right there in verse 1. First of all, to the saints who are in Ephesus. Alright, so he wrote the letter to the saints. Now, that term saints tells us that Paul was writing to Christians.

[21:26] Alright, there's no other explanation, no other possibility. He wrote to the saints and the word saints, which is hagios in the Greek language means holy ones.

It could be translated holy ones. He could have said, could have written, or we could translate it rather, to the holy ones or the consecrated ones.

And so, a saint then, in the biblical sense of the word, and that's the only one that really counts, does not refer to some spiritual elite group of people, which is basically what the Catholics, how they would define the word saints, and so they have their saints, and the Pope, and I guess others, cardinals, whatever, they make decisions over the years to grant sainthood to certain people, but it's kind of an elite group of people, and they have a lot of rules they follow, a lot of things that must be true to this person before they qualify to be a saint.

That's not what the Bible means by the word saint. The Bible is simply talking about one who has been consecrated or set apart to God.

That's really the best way to define it. a set apart, uniquely set apart unto God, for God. We belong to Him. So in that regard, then, all those who have been born again, who have trusted Christ as Lord and Savior, been born again, are saints.

[23 : 03] Not because we deserve that. Not because we are, you know, some super duper Christian, and so, you know, someone might say, you know, you're just really a saint.

We're all saints by virtue of the grace of God as He saved us. And so He's writing then to the saints, the Christians.

That's the intended reader. Number two, and I've said it's a three-fold description, and they all just write here in succession, here in verse one, to the saints and faithful.

So that would be the other word that describes the readers of this letter, the faithful. And that word is a very broad description, really, of who these people were in their relationship with Christ.

This describes, I mean, so does the word saints, that describes their relationship with Christ. But faithful also describes not just their standing or relationship, but also their lives, how they are living their lives.

[24 : 17] And so this term describes what all saints of God are to be, they're to be faithful, and it is from the Greek word pistos, pistos, and it's better, I think, translated trusty.

It's an adjective here. So we could translate this trusty. And so its meaning is both active and passive.

It's kind of a dual meaning. It's talking about those who are trusting, that is, they possess true faith. So that in itself is a clear designation for a believer.

They possess true faith. If you didn't possess true faith, you would not be a believer. And so it speaks of trusting, but it also speaks of trustworthy, or being faithful.

Not just possessing true faith, saving faith, but also living a life of faith, being faithful.

[25 : 20] So he's writing to saints who are faithful. And then third, to the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus.

That's probably the most important designation in this entire sentence. Saints, yes. Faithful, yes.

But the overarching truth of every believer is that the believer is in Christ Jesus.

In Christ Jesus. And this is one of Paul's favorite expressions. As a matter of fact, I counted them up. He used that expression, in Christ, 75 times in all of his letters.

in Christ. By far, the most repeated expression in all of Paul's writings.

In Christ. He said it over and over again. We find it 11 times right here in the book of Ephesians.

What is the idea? What is the expression?

[26 : 20] What is that conveying? Well, the born again believer, here's the idea, is both personally and vitally united in Christ or to Christ.

The union that we have in Christ. And it's personal. I mean, it's a personal union. Though it's a union we may share with many, many others and do share with other believers, it is a very personal union that I have with Christ.

That's what it means to be in Christ. And it's vital. That is, there is no other, there is no hope in any other kind of relationship than to be in Christ.

It's vital. It's life-giving. It's like branches are to a vine. You can't take the branch off and expect it to live. It must be in the vine.

It's like arms and legs are to a body. You know, you take my arm off and it's going to die. It's very personal to me.

[27 : 30] You know, they are very personal to be a part of the body. It's also vital. That is, there's no life apart from the body. And that's the idea behind this expression.

Well, not the whole idea, but a big part of it. That we are personally and vitally united in Christ. Christ. In fact, the preposition in means in the sphere of Christ. That is, we are in Him.

And it's a tremendous expression. To be placed in Him. That's the whole idea behind baptism. To be immersed in Christ.

And we didn't step into Him. It was not by our choice or any activity of ours. It was God placing us in Christ the moment we believed.

[28 : 26] And the expression in Christ is more than just a favorite with Paul. It is also the key expression for understanding the entire book of Ephesians.

I guess we could even say that this expression in Christ is the key that unlocks nearly everything Paul wrote. Not just in Ephesians, but every one of his letters. believers.

But this entire letter is devoted we could say is devoted to developing this idea of being in Christ.

And so the meaning of this expression in Christ is the essence of what it means to be a Christian.

It is the quintessential description of what a Christian is. We are one in Christ. We are in Him.

We are immersed in Him. We are in perfect union with Him as believers. And also, because this is going to be a part of the book of Ephesians, we are also one with His people.

[29 : 30] It also reaches out to describe the relationship we have with other brothers and sisters in Christ, the relationship we have in the church, in the body of Christ.

Now, with that in mind, has Paul's letter been addressed to you? That's a question that we ought to ask ourselves, though I think it's safe to say that most of us in this room, maybe all of us, hopefully all of us, could say, well, absolutely, this letter was addressed to me, because I am, by the grace of God, a saint, faithful in Christ.

But if you're not, then you're reading somebody else's mail, you could say, because it wasn't addressed to you. I hope it was addressed to you.

Now, Paul, then, is writing to saints. Now, I'm going to take this kind of a step further. He is writing to saints in the truest sense of the word.

Not just simply in relation to our position in Christ, which is totally God's grace and has nothing to do with us, but also saints in the way we express Christ in our lives.

[30 : 48] Remember, he's writing to the saints who are the faithful in Christ. And so, we're going to discover in this letter as we work our way through it, that some of the greatest truths found in the New Testament are right here in the book of Ephesians.

And they are meaty words. rich doctrine. I mean, right from the very beginning, in the first several chapters, we're going to delve into some deep, deep, deep theology that is vital for us to know and understand.

And so, these great truths are going to be found here, and so he's writing them to saints in the truest sense of the word. Those who really do hunger for the depth of meaning of Scripture.

Some have called Ephesians the Alps of the New Testament. And when you begin to look through the first few chapters, you can see why someone might come up with that description.

One scholar has referred to the book of Ephesians as Paul's third heaven epistle. Paul was caught up to the third heaven.

[32 : 10] He didn't tell anybody what he saw there. And so they think, well, this may be part of what Paul's allowed to see and understand.

John R.W. Stott said this of Ephesians. He said, the height and depth of the theology in this letter is not for casual, nominal, milk-drinking Christians to understand.

I don't believe in a nominal Christian. I don't think there is such a thing. You either are one or you aren't one. There's not an in-between there. But I get what Stott is saying.

And I think you would agree with me. If you've read Ephesians much, especially the first part of it, it is deep, deep, deep theology. As one other note about the recipients of this letter that I might mention here, Paul's intended readers were not confined just to the members of the church at Ephesus.

This letter was not just for them. And this can be a little confusing and I hope that you don't misunderstand me, but the oldest manuscripts that we have of Ephesians does not contain the words, who are in Ephesus.

[33 : 33] That whole phrase is not there in some of the oldest and more reliable manuscripts of the book, the book of Ephesians.

Don't get too alarmed about that. You might remember, or maybe you don't know, maybe you do know, that we do not have in our possession Paul's original letter to the Ephesians.

I sure wish we did. We don't have it. I mean, you can't go to some library archive, you know, maybe the Smithsonian, or go to some museum of antiquities and find Paul's letter to the Ephesians. You won't find it because it does not exist. It either no longer exists, it's been destroyed, you know, centuries ago, or it's just never been found.

But I would say this also, and maybe you know this, that that is true of every single book of the Bible. We don't have what's called the original autographs. When I say that, you know, we don't have Paul's original letter with his signature at the end of it.

[34 : 38] We don't have it. And what we do have are copies. And with many of the books of the Bible, we have many, many, many copies of copies of copies of copies of the letter, of this letter and other books in the Bible.

Some older, some newer, though new doesn't really describe what they are because they're all very, very old. And many of those copies are just fragments.

You know, they have discovered, archaeologists have discovered just fragments of pieces pieces where the rest of the letter or the manuscript has been destroyed by time, by weather, by whatever. And so, you know, scholars who delve in this kind of stuff, they bring together all of the manuscripts we have and the fragments of manuscripts.

They make judgments on their authenticity and credibility and begin to piece together. there and over the years, you know, they, our versions have come out of those manuscripts and fragments that have been put together.

[35 : 45] And archaeology is still working today. so, even since the King James was written, a number of archaeological finds have been made of various manuscripts and fragments of manuscripts of various books of the Bible.

And so, I've said all that to say that the oldest manuscripts of Ephesians that we have in our possession now do not contain the words, who are in Ephesus.

All right, now what does that mean to us? I mean, is that important? Well, most scholars then have made this conclusion that the letter to the Ephesians was, that says Ephesians there, was intended to be circulated among all the churches of Asia Minor.

And so, it was not just written to the Ephesians and for them, it was written for them, but written for all the churches in Asia Minor. Now, Ephesus was the principal city in the region.

And so, the letter may have been sent there first, although not necessarily addressed to them. In fact, again, the oldest manuscripts do not have it addressed to them specifically.

[36 : 58] But it could have been sent there first because Ephesus is the principal city in Asia Minor, or its name may have just later been attached to the letter by Copius because of Ephesus, their notoriety, their, because their principal city.

Now, that may then explain why, and you may not have noticed this when you read the letter, that may explain the impersonal nature of the letter.

The impersonal nature of it, which, by the way, is one major argument against Pauline authorship. It's very impersonal, in comparison to many of the other letters that Paul wrote.

And, actually, that's true. It has a very impersonal flavor to it, which is quite strange. It's strange, especially when you consider that Paul likely spent more time in Ephesus than he did in any other city that he describes or we know about from Scripture.

He spent as much as three years in Ephesus. And, he had visited the city, and we know this from Scripture, from the book of Acts, he visited the city on three separate occasions in his lifetime, or at least recorded lifetime.

[38 : 34] And, you can find it in Acts 16, 6, 18, 19, 19, 1, 20, 17. So, he visited the city numerous times, stayed in the city as much as three years.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 16, 8, and 9, but I will tarry in Ephesus for a great and effective door has opened to me. So, this gives you an idea of what Paul thought about Ephesus.

It was a key city, a key church, and incredible things, apparently, were happening in Ephesus. All right, so why then did he write this letter so impersonally?

And, and he did. There were no personal greetings in this letter, no, no personal addresses in the letter. For example, there is no proof that Paul ever visited the church at Rome.

We don't have any proof from Scripture that he visited. He wanted to visit there and probably did visit there. Nothing in Scripture tells us about him actually visiting the church at Rome, and yet, in his letter addressed to the church at Rome, there are as many as 26 names mentioned specifically.

[39 : 50] So, it was very personal, addressed very personally, the book to, the letter to the Romans. And, you don't have any of that in the book of Ephesians.

Just interesting. Now, the answer, then, the only answer would be that the letter was intended to be a circular letter, to circulate around all the churches in Asia Minor, to be read by all the believers in that region of the world.

And so, that's why there's not any personal addresses, any personal greetings, things, and, I think, explains then why those in Ephesus, or those who were in Ephesus, was left out of the letter.

Third, what is the overall message of this letter? I need to hurry on, don't I? I don't realize what time it was getting. What's the overall message of this letter? Well, Paul's letter is both theological and practical.

Book of Ephesians, the letter to the Ephesians, is theological and practical. There are six chapters in the letter. The first three chapters are decidedly doctrinal in nature, strongly doctrinal in nature.

[41 : 12] The last three chapters are decidedly practical, very practical in nature. The overall focus of the letter, then, is on what God has accomplished through the work of Jesus Christ, that be the first three chapters, the doctrinal part of it, but also what God continues to do through the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, and that's the last three chapters, and that's very practical.

We could sum it up this way, throughout the pages of this great letter. Paul shows us that through Christ and in Christ, we are God's new people.

The church. That's the focus here. A new people, a unique people, the church. We are the family of God the Father.

That's described in the book. We are the body of God the Son. We are the temple or the dwelling place of God the Holy Spirit. So, that really kind of describes the overall message of the letter.

And so, ultimately, the goal of the letter is that we would demonstrate plainly to the world, visibly to the world, the new thing God has created.

[42 : 41] We're to express that to the world. That's the theme of Ephesians. And then, one last thing. This letter highlights God's initiative in our lives.

You can't come away from especially the doctrinal side of the letter, first three chapters, without understanding that. God's initiative in our lives.

Paul included in his salutation two words that will be very key in the rest of the letter. Verse 2, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, this is not just simply meant to be kind of a standard greeting or kind of a friendly kind of greeting or introduction or salutation to the letter.

There's something very theological here. Grace, of course, refers to God's saving initiative in the life of the believer to save us.

[43 : 45] peace. And then the word peace refers to what God has taken the initiative to do for us. What God has taken the initiative to do for us. And that is to reconcile us to himself.

And we'll get that from this letter. In fact, we're going to find these two words, grace and peace, appearing over and over and over and over again in this letter.

He's going to talk about the gospel of peace. He's going to talk about our peace in Christ. He's going to talk about Jesus making peace by his cross. He's going to talk in this letter about preaching peace to all.

And he's going to talk about believers as believers where to be eager to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

And grace is all throughout here too. We are saved by grace. Chapter 2 verse 8. We as believers have received the immeasurable riches of his grace. Chapter 2 verse 7.

[44 : 46] And then finally we are gifted for service by the grace of God. And that will come in the latter half of the book. Chapter 3 verses 2 and 7. Chapter 4 verse 7.

Paul brings out this truth about grace. Alright, so that's an introduction to the letter. And next time we'll dive on in to the theological portion of this great letter to letter that is given to all.

By the way, not just for those in Asia Minor, but for us here today. It's meant for us to read and to understand. So I hope by the time we get done with our study we'll understand better what Paul was writing in the book of Ephesians, the letter to Ephesians.

Thank you.