

DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

Verses & Notes May 2, 2007

Ephesians 1:1

1: Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,
To the saints who are also faithful in Christ Jesus:

INTRODUCTION:

- How do you understand yourself? When you introduce yourself to someone, and describe who you are, what comes to mind as the most important things to say about yourself? What rises to the top, and what goes unsaid? This is part of what we will be discussing today on **Deep In Scripture**.

- Welcome ... website / phone numbers / special:
- Begin our discussion of St. Paul's Greeting; two weeks; much to learn in something we too often take for granted;
- Today greetings in conversation, letters, and email are generally no more than convention;
 - But in the past greetings were carefully worded, set the tone, & carried great meaning.
- We'll look at this greeting from Paul at four levels:
 - As an example of St. Paul's normal letter style;
 - What does it reveal about Paul's understanding of himself;
 - What does it reveal about how the recipients were to understand themselves;
 - What does it reveal about how you & I should understand ourselves.

1. Examine the Greeting as an Example of St. Paul's literary style:

"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God..."

To the saints who are also faithful in Christ Jesus, or

To the saints who are in Ephesus and faithful in Christ Jesus.

- Review...
 - Unanimously accepted for 18 centuries;
 - One of 4 of St. Paul's Captivity Epistles
 - Written from Rome ~ AD 63
 - Delivered by Tychicus (6:21)
 - To the believers at Ephesus.
 - Why questioned?
 - Impersonal: none of his usual personal greetings;
 - Voc / style different from his other letters;
 - Theology / doctrines more developed.
 - "To Ephesus" not present in a few important early manuscripts.
 - An Explanation: (many, many views)
 - Begin by accepting the universal witness of history;
 - St. Paul was in prison!!!!
 - Possibly Tychicus was his amanuensis (secretary);
 - Development of his own understanding... (i.e., my own development)
 - St. Paul dictates a homily addressed to the newly baptized Gentile converts.

BREAK

- Generally the way St. Paul addressed all his letters: *[Note: leaving benediction until next week]*

"Paul, Silva'nus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalo'nians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ..." 1 Thes 1:1

"Paul, Silva'nus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalo'nians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ..." 2 Thes 1"1

"Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sos'thenes, To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours." 1 Cor 1:1-2

"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother. To the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Acha'ia." 2 Cor 1:1

"Paul an apostle -- not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead - - and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia..." Gal 1:1-2

*"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ;
To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints..." Rom 1:1-7*

"Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philip'pi, with the bishops and deacons..." Phil 1:1

"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ at Colos'sae..." Col 1:1-2

- Not all the same:
 - Sometimes without any descriptions of himself; more impersonal;
 - Sometimes others included as equals in the greeting;
 - Sometimes with unique personal descriptions, possibly bec of who he is writing to;
 - To either the "church" in a certain place, or to the believers in those churches;
 - Sometimes with descriptions of those believers;
 - Nearly always with reference to a specific place;
 - THEREFORE, not merely out of habit, but carefully worded.

2. What does this greeting reveal about Paul's understanding of himself?

1. Paul

- He begins with reference to himself as a unique individual before God & them;
- His original Semitic name was Saul; not until Acts 13:9, do we hear, "Saul, also known as Paul..."; from then on Paul. What happened?
- Biblical examples of name changes usually signify change in mission...
 - i.e., Abram to Abraham; Jacob to Israel; Simon to Peter.
- Not necessarily changed upon conversion; other examples: John Mark, etc.
- However, his mission did change: Gal 2:8

"for he who worked through Peter for the mission to the circumcised worked through me also for the Gentiles..."
- So he may have chosen to use Paul as a sign / aid to his mission: 1 Cor 9:19-23

"For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law -- though not being myself under the law -- that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law -- not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ -- that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings."

2. apostle

- He identifies himself according to his calling: Eph 4:11-12

"And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ..."

- This is a radical chance in his self-understanding: Phil 3:4-7
"Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If any other man thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law a Pharisee, as to zeal a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ."

3. of Christ Jesus

- Seems so redundant to us today, but in his day, this separated him from the majority of humanity! He was not an apostle of himself nor of any number of religious sects;
- His self-identify defined in relationship to Christ Jesus.

4. by the will of God

- He often includes this in other greetings: 1 Cor, 2 Cor, Col, 2 Tim, expanded in Gal:
"Paul an apostle -- not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, ..."
- Why? Because the "fierce wolves" are challenging his authority & his message!
- We can presume that the saints in Ephesus knew about his conversion;
- But what is he saying by this? "God made me this, so you better listen!!"
 - No: this was God's desire for him; Paul had the freedom to chose otherwise!
 - Isaiah 6:7-9
He touched my mouth with it. "See," he said, "now that this has touched your lips, your wickedness is removed, your sin purged." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?" "Here I am," I said: "send me!" And he replied: Go and say to this people..."

3. What does this greeting reveal about how the recipients were to understand themselves?

1. **No specific name (as in ltrs to Tim & Titus):** therefore general letter;

2. To the saints

- "hagios" = same word used for "holy" [Holy Spirit] = holy ones;
- used in other greetings:
"to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints" 1 Cor
"To the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Acha'ia." 2 Cor 1:1
"To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philip'pi, with the bishops and deacons..." Phil 1:1
- Either general reference to believers, or those who have been made holy thru baptism;
- Could imply that they were NOT apostles, bishops, or deacons, but laity: their calling = To be holy!

3. who are [in Ephesus]

- As in other letters we accept that St. Paul was writing to a specific group of Christians;
- They have a unique "mission field;" the place in which God has placed them to live;
- It is here that they have their primary witness.

4. [and] faithful

- Being baptized saints / Christians is not a status / a guaranteed level;
- Rather, St. Paul recognizes that they have remained faithful / they are abiding.

5. in Christ Jesus

- Very common NT phrase that describes the entirety of their new life: Eph 2:13
"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ."
- 2 Cor 5:17 *"Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come."*

BREAK

4. What does this greeting reveal about how you & I should understand ourselves?

- Our name says that we are truly unique in the eyes of God;
- We have been set apart by our baptism, called to be Holy;
- We are not an accident, but set apart by the will of God, which we must freely choose;
- We are called to be faithful to our calling, not a guarantee; requires obedience;
- We must understand all this in relationship to being "in Christ."