

## If The Shoe Fits – Eph 1:1-2

Eph 1:1-2. Last week I introduced our new theme, and this week is the study to go along with it. A study of the book of Ephesians. And the purpose, is to live as we are: Coram Deo. In the presence of God, under the authority of God, for the glory of God. We are Coram Deo, so we should *live* like it. *Conscious* of his presence, *submissive* to his authority, and *always* for his glory. That's what it means to live Coram Deo.

And Ephesians is particularly helpful with that. Starting in the first 2 verses. They're not throw-aways. Take a look. (Outline)  
[1] Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,  
To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus:  
[2] Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's a standard Greco-Roman greeting, similar to Paul's other greetings. He identifies *himself* as the author; then the recipients, people *and* place; then he extends a blessing. And there are 4 corresponding truths for *our* lives. Truths that set the stage for the *rest* of the letter, and fit. Perfectly.

➤ Any shoe people out there? Shoe lovers? Not me. In fact, up until about 5 years ago, when I finally started listening to my wife, I had 2 pair. A pair of tennis shoes, and a pair of dress shoes. Done. No agonizing or asking which pair to wear with what, just put 'em on.

And while I have a few more dress shoes, the tennis shoes were a tougher sell. I just wore them until they were ragged.

Until I had some back issues last year, and someone told me that running in tennis shoes more than 6 months old is like driving on a flat tire. Great. Mine were 6 years old. So I decided to put them on my Christmas list. And lo and behold these bad boys showed up (Shoes). Pretty cool. Asics. DynaFlyte2. FlyteFoam. Gel.

Sounded good. Looked good. Reputable company. But I was skeptical. And kind of *liked* my flat tires. And what about the size? They probably wouldn't even fit.

But I decided to give them a try; and surprise, surprise – they're awesome. They support my feet better, my arches better, my heel better. They have way more cushion. And they actually reduce my fatigue. So that now, I wouldn't *think* of going back to my old ones. And wish I would have made the switch earlier. Tried them earlier. Trusted earlier.

And that's the very thing I want to commend to you regarding Ephesians: **Ephesians was written by the Apostle Paul – trust it. (v1a)** Don't wait to see if it suits your fancy, or your theology, or your preconceived notions. Don't wait to see if you like it or not; trust it from the get-go. All of it.

Because first of all, **it's authentic**. This is no fake, no afterthought. Someone writing later on, using Paul's name. It's written by the Apostle Paul himself. That's what it says. Paul [v1], *an apostle of Christ Jesus*. In standard first century fashion, he identifies *himself* as the author.

➤ Now, you might say, "Ya, but *anybody* could have said that. *Anybody* could have used his name." And you'd be right. It wasn't uncommon in that day. But the early church, who was in a position to *know* whether Paul wrote it or not, *affirmed* it. Unanimously. They affirmed his authorship. Using it for instruction and worship, and including it in the Canon, the Bible.

Not only that, but Paul supplied a witness. Turn to Eph 6:21-22. Paul's wrapping up here, and says:  
[21] So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. [22] I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.

Paul was imprisoned in Rome when he wrote this letter. He mentions it 3 times. So he sent Tychicus to fill them in – *the beloved brother and faithful minister*. Implying, with the word *the*, that they knew and respected him. He's *the* beloved brother instead of *a* beloved brother.

So he not only supplied a witness, but a well-known witness. Something a pseudonymous writer, a fake writer, would never do. Because all they had to do was ask. "Did Paul write this and send you?" It's authentic.

Third, the style matches Paul's style; what we see in *other* letters. Not to mention the straightforward manner in which he writes, and the substantive nature of the content. Unlike fake writings, it's the developed theology of a man who's written about it before, like in Romans, and has lived it himself for 25 years. Leading us to the conclusion that it's authentic and trustworthy.

➤ Not only that, **it's authoritative**. Trust it because it's authoritative. Because Paul was an Apostle. *An apostle of Christ Jesus*. V1. Someone directly and personally *commissioned* by Jesus, to declare his message; the Gospel. Someone accepted by the early church as inspired by the Holy Spirit. Someone in agreement with the prophets of old and the other apostles. And someone whose message was authenticated by miracles. *That's* an apostle of Christ Jesus. And that equals authority.

So does the fact that Paul's apostleship was all *by the will of God*. Paul, *an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God*, Paul wasn't *self*-appointed. It wasn't *his* decision. God did it. He had God's backing. Which means the things he wrote are *authoritative* for our life and belief.

➤ And that's important, because the topics are challenging.

Like predestination – the doctrine that God chose those who would believe before the foundation of the world. We’ll see it next week. It’s challenging.

Or how about salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone? Chapter 2. No works to be found. Not for salvation.

And then there’s sexual purity, submission in marriage, and *spiritual forces of evil* with whom we fight but can’t see.

The topics are challenging – intellectually *and* emotionally.

And if we don’t trust that Ephesians is authoritative, that it’s indeed from God, we will dismiss it, fail to live it, and maybe even fail to persevere in our faith.

It may not be your *grandma’s shoe*; It may not be what you were told growing up.

It may not match your view of the world; your thinking.

But it’s a really good *shoe* that you can trust.

Second . . .

**Ephesians was written to a culture like ours – embrace it. (v1b)**

See if this doesn’t line up. We know from the Bible, from extra-biblical literature, and from archeology that Ephesus was:

Secular, affluent, religious, diverse, debase, political, organized, athletic, business-oriented, economically varied . . .

Architecturally advanced, artistic, mindful of the past, and full of entertainment.

Does that not describe us? *Our* culture?

So often we think we’re so *different* than those who’ve gone before. Even those in our *own* culture. Sure, we have more outlets and *options* to satisfy our desires . . .

But the desires are the same. And in this case, so is the surrounding culture.

Which makes the bridge of relevance a mere step. And a small one at that.

So Ephesians is for now and here, just as much as it was for then and there. A perfectly formed shoe that we ought to embrace. That’s the point.

**Embrace it.** Wholeheartedly. Eagerly. Joyfully.

And not just the easy parts, but the hard ones. The *tough* pills to swallow; as I just mentioned. Embrace the *hard* stuff just like you embrace . . .

God’s love, or God’s grace, or God’s salvation. Embrace it *all*.

Out with the pick-and-choose method of Bible study, and in with the embrace-it-all mindset.

➤ And just to give you an *overview* of what that entails, let me commend this little memory device to you: **3-2-1 Life!**

It’s a simple framework to not only *understand* Ephesians, but embrace all that it says.

“3”, as in **3 Goals**. Paul wrote Ephesians with 3 main goals in mind:

A. To strengthen our faith.

B. To promote our unity.

C. To encourage our holiness.

So when we embrace it, we’re embracing faith, unity, and holiness.

We’re saying, “We’re in. We want those things. Those are our goals too.”

The “2”, is **2 Sections**. Ephesians is divided into 2 main sections. Chapters 1-3 and chapters 4-6.

1-3 covering *doctrine*, massive theological truths; and 4-6 covering *duty* – the obedient *application* of those truths.

In fact, of the 40 imperatives, the 40 commands found in Ephesians, only 1 is in the first section.

So when we embrace Ephesians, we’re embracing both doctrine *and* duty. *2 sections*.

And “1” is **1 Theme**. There’s one common theme woven throughout the entire book – Life in Christ. How we get it, how we live it, grow in it, and persevere.

That’s the primary theme. How to *live* Coram Deo. Live, in Christ.

3-2-1 Life! (**Summary**) That’s what Paul wants us to embrace. Just like he wanted the church in Ephesus to embrace it. A culture just like ours.

Third . . .

**Ephesians was written to believers like us – apply it. (v1b)**

That’s who Paul is referring to when he says *saints* in v1b. *To the saints who are in Ephesus*. Believers.

Not just the super-spiritual or elite as some religions advocate, but *all* believers; the church. That’s the context every time Paul uses the word. *7* times.

He’s talking about those called out and set apart through faith and repentance.

Which means we’re *all* saints if that’s you. Every single one of us. Just like them.

And *that* means, we ought to **apply it** just like them.

Saints that we are, we ought to take it to heart and put it into practice.

Put the shoes on (*one shoe*), and run.

It’s one thing to look at these bad boys and *say* you trust them, *say* you like them and embrace them, it’s another to actually put them on and *apply* their greatness.

Make sure this isn’t just an intellectual exercise. Where you look at it carefully, but never put it on. Never put it into practice.

A mental exercise where you clarify your doctrine and know your stuff, but do very little. Know it *and* live it. Understand it *and* apply it.

Because apart from *application*, there’s no *transformation*.

Education *in-forms*, but application *trans-forms*.

That’s why all our Bible studies, all our preaching and teaching, and all our ministries emphasize application.

So whatever you do, put the shoe of Ephesians *on*, instead of just looking at it. Because it’s written to believers just like us.

➤ Believers, mind you, who *are faithful in Christ Jesus*. See it? V1b?

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

It’s a compliment. He’s writing to saints who are *faithful*. Steadfast in their walk with Christ. Devoted. Persevering.

So he commends them. For *already* applying God’s Word. *Already* applying the truth. *Already* doing what they should. They’re faithful.

What he's *not* saying, is that this letter is *only* for the faithful.

"If you're faithful, I'm writing to you. If you're not, tough luck."

That phrase is not meant to exclude, but commend.

Because the truths of Ephesians are for everyone.

Those who have *fallen* in their walk with Jesus, those who have stopped, those who are coasting, and those who are running.

The rest of the letter bears that out, and the Word of God is that applicable.

Meeting you right where you're at.

If, you put the shoe on. Ephesians will meet you where you're at if you *apply* the truths.

Leading to a transformation of *Christlikeness*, just like a good pair of shoes leads to good health.

And then last . . .

**Ephesians was written to bless us – receive it. (v2)**

*To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: [2] Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

It's a blessing. Paul is extending a blessing of grace and peace, favor and settled-ness.

Bookends of *every* blessing.

**Augustine** was a 4th century theologian from northern Africa, who wrote one of the all-time classics of the Christian faith: *Confessions*.

And one of his first thoughts (**Quote**), speaking to God, is this:

*"You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."*

That's the peace Paul desires for us. The blessing he speaks over us. Rest in God.

The question is, will you receive it?

We're made for it. We long for it. We're offered it.

And yet we fail to receive it sometimes because of our sin, or doubt, or pride.

Don't go there. Ephesians was written to bless us. And the best thing we can do is

receive all the grace and peace it affords.\*\*\*\*\*

And notice that Paul isn't just manufacturing this blessing, he's extending it on *God's* behalf – God the Father and God the Son.

Because God the Father is the *source* of all blessing, and God the Son is the *means* of all blessing; the means of delivering it and receiving it.

Through his death and resurrection, his ongoing intercession, and his constant presence in our lives – he delivers, and we receive, God's grace; God's peace.

➤ Is that true of you? Have *you* received the grace and peace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord?

Have you professed your belief in him, and repented of your sin to him?

Because that's where his blessing starts.

But that's definitely not where it stops.

He continues to offer it through the presence of his Spirit and the truth of his Word.

A Word that's living and active. And Ephesians is part of it.

So whatever you do, **receive it**. *Receive* the blessing of Ephesians.

Read it over and over as we work our way through it. 20 times.

Soak it up slowly at times, and read it *all* at times. Plumb the depths and scale the heights.

Because there's grace and peace just *waiting* to be given. Blessings just *waiting* to be received. (**Summary**)

➤ Ephesians fits. The shoe fits. And prepares us for *life*, just like putting *these* on prepare me to workout.

Trust it. Embrace it. Apply it. And receive it.

**Prayer** – Lord, your word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. So increase our desire to know it and live it; trust it and apply it; hear it and heed it. And transform us into the image of your Son, Jesus, as we do. In whose name we pray. Amen.

**Close – Guest Central**

**Lift** – Monday is the last chance to register.

**One To The Next** – This is a handout to help you give toward our Capital Campaign. To renovate the south end of our building for children and students.

One side covers the *Initial Gift*; and the other, how to make a *Pledge*; to be given over the next 2 years. 2 different things.

And I trust you're thinking and praying about that. Not only for yourself, but for our church.

I remain convinced that God is faithful to provide if we are faithful to give.

Elder/Deacon Prayer