

Sermon Discussion – 21 January 2024

Read Ephesians 1:1-2

Getting Started *Sharing from personal experience*

When you receive a letter (or email), is it your habit to skip to the body of the content, passing over the greeting and skipping the closing? Why or why not?

Observation *Discovering the context*

If we truly believe that all Scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable to us (*2 Timothy 3:16-17*), then even seemingly “insignificant opening remarks” can make a transformational impact on our view of God and ourselves. In these two short and simple verses, much can be learned about Paul’s view of his fellow believers and what he wishes for them.

- Why does it matter that Paul is an apostle and has the authority to write this letter?
- After greeting the believers, Paul gives two blessings. What are they and why are they significant?

Interpretation *Discovering the meaning*

1. Discuss the concept of being called "saints" as presented in Ephesians 1:1-2. How does this term challenge traditional views of what it means to be a saint? In what ways does the understanding of sainthood as being "in Christ" differ from other perspectives on holiness?
2. How does the concept of being a saint challenge the notion that our primary identity begins as a sinner? Discuss the importance of recognizing our identity as saints in Christ despite our ongoing struggles with sin.
3. Discuss the difference between the saving grace and empowering grace of God. How does the empowering grace of God help believers overcome ongoing sins? Share examples from your life where you experienced the empowering grace of God leading to victory over sin.
4. Differentiate between conviction and condemnation. How can recognizing God's conviction lead to positive change, while condemnation leads to despair?
5. Examine how Jesus, as the Son of God, served as a model for living out the identity of a saint. How does understanding your identity in Christ empower you to resist temptation and live a life of obedience?

Application *Putting knowledge into practice*

- Discuss the statement, *"Our identity determines our activity."* How does this principle influence your approach to life and decision-making? Share personal stories of how recognising your identity in Christ has positively impacted your actions, attitudes, and relationships.

- Try memorising Ephesians 1:2...
"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

- Pray for your love for Christ and the Church to be increased during our study of Ephesians.