

Ephesians: Salutation

"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, to the saints that are at Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus; Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1:1f). Out of thirteen letters which bear Paul's signature; only four do not affirm the apostleship of Paul; his two letters to the Thessalonians, his letter to the Philippians and his letter to Philemon. Of the nine letters which have this affirmation; Paul's expression of apostleship varies little. The phrase *"an apostle according to the will of God"* is duplicated in his two epistles to Corinth, his letter to Colossae and his second letter to Timothy. He affirmed he was a *"called apostle"* and *"an apostle by the commandment of God"* (1 Cor. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1). His claim to apostleship is more strongly expressed in Galatians 1:1f where, to churches where some disputed his claim, he wrote, *"Paul, an apostle (not from man, neither through men, but through Jesus Christ, and God our Father who raised him from the dead)"* (Gal. 1:1).

The word *"apostle"* means one sent and while men generally connect the term to the twelve whom Jesus chose and called *"apostles,"* it is not confined to this usage. Jesus is called the *"Apostle and high priest of our confession"* (Heb. 3:1). Barnabas is also identified as an apostle in Acts 14:4. Jesus was the apostle of His Father, sent on a mission to redeem man by His sacrifice; Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the Antioch, Syrian church as they embarked on that which is called *"Paul's first Missionary Journey."* Paul's claim to apostleship, which he enlarged upon in the Ephesian letter, was unique: he was an apostle of Jesus, just as the original twelve, but his apostleship was to the Gentiles (Eph. 3:8; et al). Paul is most defensive of his apostleship in his Galatian letter where he firmly claims that his knowledge of the gospel did not come from earlier apostles or any man; rather it was by direct revelation from God (Gal. 1:11f); that when he laid the gospel he received from Christ before those who were apostles before him, they could neither add to nor take away to or from anything he said; rather they gave to him the right hand of fellowship (Ga. 2:6f) and finally, he recounted how he had rebuked Peter for his inconsistent behavior toward Gentiles (Gal. 2:11). His claim of apostleship was that the message he taught was the gospel and even though an angel should teach different than he taught, they would be accursed (Gal. 1:6-9).

"To the saints ... at Ephesus." Because some very ancient manuscripts omit *"at Ephesus"* some dispute that the epistle to the Ephesians actually was written exclusively to them. They speculate that the letter actually was the one written to Laodicea (of which letter Paul made mention in Colossians 4:16) or perhaps that Paul wrote a number of *"circular letters,"* altering them

only to include the different name of the church to which it was addressed. Some feel that since Paul stayed at Ephesus longer than any other known place he worked, it would be unreasonable to suppose that he would write a letter to them without sending greetings to some who were well known to him there. These further observe that in Paul's Roman letter, although he had never been there, he sends greetings to 28 different brethren or groups of brethren. Such an argument does not have merit. Paul stayed almost two years in Corinth and although he wrote two lengthy epistles to them, he sends greeting to none he knew there, with the exception of urging Corinthians to be subject to the house of Stephanas (1 Cor. 16:15). As to his greeting so many in the Roman Church, might it be suggested that since he was unknown to them, the many brethren who did know him would give credence to both his authority as an apostle and the letter he wrote? Still, while some have raised doubt regarding the church the epistle was originally intended for, the genuineness of the letter as being from the hand of Paul has not been argued against.

"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

This greeting of Paul to the Ephesians brethren in this form occurs exactly the same way as he greets the Romans, Corinthians, Philippians, Galatians and his personal letter to Philemon. Five other variations of the greetings are to be found at the beginning of his other six letters, signed by him as his own. NEXT: "Heavenly Places."

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