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# I

## GREETING

### 1:1-2

#### THE WRITER (1:1a)

THE DISCOVERY of numerous papyrus letters dating from the same period as the New Testament reveals that the writers of the New Testament epistles followed the same general literary form as their contemporaries, with certain distinctively Christian additions. Letters usually began with the naming of the author and the addressee, followed by a greeting. The epistle to the Ephesians is no exception.

The writer names himself as Paul, the Roman name which he always used in the Gentile world. Because he was the son of a Jew who was also a Roman citizen, and grew up in a Greek-speaking city, he undoubtedly had two names from birth (i.e., Paul and Saul).

Paul claims the position of apostle of Christ Jesus. This statement indicates the official character of the letter. Furthermore, the title reveals that the term *apostle* is used here in the restricted sense of one who was directly chosen by Christ, as distinct from others called "apostles" in the more general sense (e.g., Epaphroditus, who was called "your apostle" because he was chosen by the Philippian church, Phil 2:25, Gk.). The restricted use seems limited to the Twelve and Paul. It should be understood, as in the sense of Ephesians 4:11, as referring to the apostles who were directly chosen by Christ and granted as gifts to the church for its establishment (cf. also Eph 2:20).

Although he wrote while confined as a prisoner in Rome, Paul had no doubt that his ministry was the will of God for him. This conviction sustained him through his trials. Its mention conveys the sense of authority which he felt and may also suggest his own sense of humility. His ministry was not the product of his own choosing, but was God's doing from beginning to end.

#### THE READERS (1:1*b*)

The addressees are called saints and believers in Christ Jesus. The original grammar indicates that this forms one grammatical unit. "In Christ Jesus" belongs with the whole phrase. Paul looks at them as in vital union with Christ. As such they are "set-apart ones" (lit. meaning of "saints") by the action of God who saved them. Viewed from the human side, they are believers, ones who have trusted Christ. Thus the description refers to all true believers.

They are residing at Ephesus. (See Introduction for discussion of textual problem.) This city was the scene of Paul's longest ministry recorded in Acts. He first preached in the city on the return portion of his second missionary journey (Ac 18:19-21). On the third missionary journey, he stayed three years (19:1—20:1, 31). Ephesus was the chief city of the Roman province of Asia. It was the site of the great temple of Artemis, which housed the image of the goddess supposedly fallen from heaven. The city's open-air theater could seat twenty-five thousand people. In later years Timothy and the apostle John would have extended ministries in this important city.

#### THE SALUTATION (1:2)

The classical greeting in Greek letters used an infinitive form (see Ja 1:1; Ac 23:26) which we usually translate simply as "Greetings." In Paul's letters, however, he changes the form

slightly to the cognate word *grace* and couples with it the common Jewish greeting "peace." This joining of grace and peace (always in this order in Paul's opening greetings) thus adapts the well-known formulas of the Greek and Hebrew worlds into a most meaningful Christian expression. It indicates Paul's desire that his readers enjoy the favor of God which will produce the inner satisfaction that stabilizes the heart (Phil 4:7).

These blessings find their source in God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. The joining of these two persons indicates that both are of equal rank in the mind of the writer.