

Identity -vs- WEidentity

Ephesians 1:1-3

Dr. Dennis Daniels

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus.”

The first three verses of Ephesians will tell us:

People: Who is writing the letter and who it is written to

Prayer: Paul’s opening prayer for the Ephesians.

Praise: Paul’s praise for God’s great blessings

I. PEOPLE

Paul... an Apostle

An Apostle is “a messenger sent with a commission” “an authorized spokesman for Jesus Christ.”

The Ephesians ... Saints

“American Heritage Dictionary

(1) (a) (Theology) A person officially recognized, especially by canonization, as being entitled to public veneration and capable of interceding for people on earth. (b) A person who has died and gone to heaven. (2) An extremely virtuous person.

“This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord. God did extraordinary miracles through Paul.” Acts 19:10-11 (NIV)

“And what value was there in fighting wild beasts – those men of Ephesus – if it was only for what I gain in this life down here?”
1 Cor. 15:32 (TLB)

“You have patience and have suffered troubles for my name and have not given up. But I have this against you: You have left the love you had in the beginning. So remember where you were before you fell. Change your hearts and do what you did at first. If you do not change, I will come to you and will take away your lamp stand from its place.” Revelation 2:3-5 (NCV)

Saint in the Bible

“One who has been Set Apart” according to the Bible’s definition, ALL believers are saints.

Words used to describe believers in the book of Acts

- Saint (Acts 26:10)
- Disciple (Acts 6:1)
- Christian (Acts 11:26)
- The Nazarenes (Acts 24:5)
- Followers of the way (Acts 9:1)

EPHESUS

- Ephesus was built as a trade city. The ruin of its harbor had made it by Paul’s day into a “temple and tourist” city.
- Ephesus was Paul’s “-est” church
 1. Long est stay (3 ½ years)
 2. Great est impact (All of Asia heard)
 3. High est love (Acts 20)
 4. Strong est criticism (The silversmiths riot)
- This letter was written nearly 10 years after Paul’s three-year stay. Paul was a prisoner in Rome.

In Ephesus “an easygoing Christianity could never have survived. It could not have conquered and trained the world...”

Sir William Ramsey

... to the saints **in** Ephesus ... to the faithful **in** Christ Jesus

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Eph. 1:2 (NIV)

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.” Eph. 1:3 (NIV)

Notice the two “worlds” the Christian lives in:

In Ephesus In Christ

In Christ Jesus is used 15 times in this letter alone

II. PRAYER

Paul begins ALL 13 of his letters with a prayer for grace and peace.
That means THIS IS IMPORTANT!

GRACE: God’s underserved Gift

PEACE: Within

Ephesians 1:1-2 is filled with “twos”

- 2 credentials of Paul (Apostle, by God’s will)
- 2 descriptions of Ephesians (Saints, Faithful)
- A prayer for 2 things (Grace, Peace)
- 2 sources of answered prayer (God, Jesus)

III. PRAISE

Who is the richest person in the world?

The Sultan of Brunei (\$37 billion)?

The Waltons (\$23.5 billion)?

The Mars “candy” family (who made 1 billion just last year)?

The Richest person in the world is the believer!

“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.” Eph 2:6 (NIV)

“From the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another.” John 1:16 (NIV)

“I pray that the faith you share may make you understand every blessing we have in Christ.” Philemon 1:6 (NCV)

Ephesians has been called “the Switzerland of the New Testament”

“Blessed in the heavenly realms”

“EVERY spiritual blessing”

Not some... your share of ... or even most spiritual blessings.
EVERY ONE! Just in case you don’t think He’s serious, God turned up the volume on this in the next 11 verses.

Attitudes that keep Christians from enjoying their riches in Christ

- Puritanism... confusing having less with being more spiritual
- Materialism - confusing material riches and spiritual riches.
- Selfishness – failing to see our riches as opportunities to serve others
- Comparison - looking at what others have rather than at what God has given me

A Simple Outline of Ephesians:

Resources

Chapter 1-3: WHO I AM

Doctrine

My Wealth in Christ

Responsibilities

Chapter 3-6: WHAT We DO

Duty

Our Walk in Christ