

The Beloved

Ephesians 1:1-6



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FOCAL Ephesians 1:1-6^{KJV} Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints¹ which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: {2} Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. {3} Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: {4} According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: {5} Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, {6} To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

There are times in our lives when God seems far away. When threatened or despised, when hated by those whom we consider to be friends, when disease or sickness hits us or our families, when death visits, or when circumstances put us deep in the middle of a *valley* - these are times when we are tempted to believe that God is far away or does not care for us. Nothing could be farther from Scriptural Truth.

As Paul wrote these words he was not sitting in a palace, on a throne, nor even in a modest home surrounded by friends. No, my friends, Paul wrote this letter while sitting in a Roman prison awaiting trial². We can only

KJV all texts are King James Version, unless otherwise noted

1 G40, ἅγιος, *hagios*, *hag'-ee-os*, From ἅγιος *hagos* (an *awful* thing) compare G53, [H2282]; *sacred* (physically *pure*, morally *blameless* or *religious*, ceremonially *consecrated*): - (most) holy (one, thing), saint. (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries)

2 Dr. Van Dine, *Notes on Ephesians*, found freely at soniclight.com:

imagine how terrible the conditions were in those ancient prisons, having never experienced such a thing ourselves. One of the best descriptions I've read of ancient prisons is in a book written by Brian Rapske called *The Book of Acts and Paul in Roman Custody*. In this book the author writes³:

"... Thucydides writes: Crowded as they were in large numbers in a deep and narrow place, at first the sun and the suffocating heat caused them distress, there being no roof, while the nights that followed were, on the contrary, autumnal and cold, so that the sudden change engendered illness. they were so cramped for space that they had to do everything in the same place ... moreover, the dead were heaped together one upon another, some having died from wounds or because of the change in temperature or like causes, so that there was a stench that was intolerable. Diodorus Siculus writes about the prison at Alba Fucens: This prison is a deep underground dungeon, no larger than a nine couch room, dark and noisome from the large numbers committed to the place, who were men under condemnation on capital charges ..."

Though Paul was not, at this time, in these particular prisons, he was certainly under arrest and in chains where ever he was. You would expect someone

³According to internal reference the author was a prisoner at the time of writing (cf. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20). It is debated as to whether this was during his detainment at Caesarea (Acts 24) or Rome (Acts 28). The Roman imprisonment, which occurred in A.D. 60-62, is more likely. Since there is no indication of his expected release, as there seems to be in Philippians (cf. Phil. 2:23-24), it may be assumed that it was written early in Paul's incarceration, perhaps in A.D. 60/61."

³ pages 197-198 of this book

imprisoned by these harsh authorities to write and either ...

- (a) Complain of their current state of being. **"Oh, how terrible the conditions are here! I am bound in these heavy chains. I have no privacy. My every move is monitored. I have to eat what they give me"**. Or else,
- (b) To demand prayers that the current condition of his imprisonment or his circumstances would be changed. **"Oh, please pray for me, that God would save me and remove me from this prison"**.

Paul did neither of these things. He did not complain, nor was he under any form of depression whatsoever. How did Paul keep his center of balance? How did he maintain a good attitude, even in the worst of situations?

1. Paul Understood Jesus Christ As The "Beloved of God"

FOCAL Ephesians 1:6 ... To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein **he {God} hath made us accepted in the beloved.**

This is perhaps the *most important* question you will ever be asked: **What think ye of Christ?** Jesus asked the Pharisees this question in:

**Matthew 22:42 ... What think ye of Christ?
whose son is he?**

The Pharisees answered Jesus:

Matthew 22:42b ... They say unto him, The son of David.

Who is **Jesus Christ** to you? If He is merely the **son of David**, Someone Who is but a mere Man, a descendant of an ancient forefather and king of Israel, then you have no hope when the hard times come. Jesus asked the Pharisees this question:

Matthew 22:43-45 {Jesus} saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, {44} The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? {45} If David then call him, Lord, how is he his son?

Our Lord quoted **Psalm 110:1** to His enemies. Jesus asked a simple question. If **Christ is but a mere Man, then why did King David refer to Him as LORD or Eternal God?** The Pharisees couldn't answer that question, and neither can anyone who does not accept that Jesus is not only **Pure and Perfect Man but also Eternal God among us.**

The Jesus that Paul believed in and loved was not a *mere figment of the imagination*, nor was He *mere man like we are*, but Paul's Jesus is the **Beloved of God**. When

Jesus was being baptized in the Jordan by John the Baptist **God spoke from the Heavens** and said:

Matthew 3:17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

You may not understand the **Doctrine of the Trinity**, how God is only One, yet in **Three Distinct Persons**, but you do not have to understand it. Here it is. Look upon it with the eye of faith, not with the idiocy of human reason! God spoke from Heaven and said, **THIS is MY BELOVED SON**. He is loved of God the Father. It is the Father Who spoke, and the **Holy Spirit Who descended as a Dove to Jesus**. He is Beloved, Cherish of God, Very God of Very God, God the Son of Whom David said **This is my LORD**.

When the Pharisees, worshiping the *Written Word of God but not it's Author*, demanded that Jesus not heal a certain man on the Sabbath Day, God the Son healed this poor man anyway. Jesus did not come to this earth to please the Pharisees nor the Sadducees. Jesus came, the Scripture says,

Luke 19:10 ... to seek and to save that which is lost ...

The Beloved of God came to save souls. The Bible testifies that when Jesus healed the man with the withered hand that ...

Matthew 12:15-18 ... great multitudes

followed him, and he healed them all; {16} And charged them that they should not make him known: {17} That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah⁴ the prophet, saying, {18} Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles.

Just as our minds cannot comprehend the harsh cruelty of a Roman prison, we also cannot comprehend the wonder of God's love! **Eternal God the Son, " Him which is, and which was, and which is to come"** lowered Himself from the splendors of Heaven to become **The Servant of the Godhead**. The **Great I AM** came from Heaven to **heal us from sin**, to save us by Calvary, to die for us and rise again so that we could enter His Heaven. And again, we see Jesus on the **Mount of Transfiguration**, shown in all His glory. The disciples on seeing Jesus with *Moses and Elijah* said:

Matthew 17:4 ... Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles⁵; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

What was God's response to this request, that there be

⁴ quotation from Isaiah 49:5-6; 52:13, 53:11

⁵ G4633, σκηνή, skēnē, *skay-nay'*, Apparently akin to G4632 and G4639; a tent or cloth hut (literally or figuratively): - habitation, tabernacle. (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries)

three tabernacles or altars erected on that mountain? Would God the Father sanction three *identical tabernacles*? Is Jesus Christ *only a man like Moses and Elijah were men*? Look at what God said:

Matthew 17:5-6 ... behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. {6} And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.

Moses was a great man, but he was a mere man. Moses was a man of faith, but in the end he relied on his humanity and thus failed God (**Numbers 20:10**). He *struck the Rock that was Christ*, disobeying God in the wilderness, and died in sight of the Promised Land. Elijah was, once more, a great man of faith. When he prayed that *it not rain* God answered his prayer (**James 5:17**), and it did not rain for over three years. Elijah was one of the few men caught up into Heaven without dying (**2 Kings 2:11**). And yet, when **Jezebel threatened his life, Elijah went into deep depression (1 Kings 19:2)**. God finally calmed the prophet and brought him from this state of utter despair, but Elijah was surely no equal with Jesus Christ. Make three altars, each one *equally* for Moses, Elijah, and Jesus? No, no, a thousand times no! Of the three on that mountaintop that day, only of Jesus did the Father say:

Matthew 17:5 ... behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in

whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

Jesus Christ is the One and Only Beloved of God. When He took on human flesh through the Virgin Mary the angel Gabriel came and told her:

Luke 1:35 ... The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

Mary, you will bear the **Son of God**, you will bear the humanity of Jesus Christ. This is no *mere man*, no *mighty mortal*, but this is Eternal God in the Flesh. This is the One that Isaiah prophesied of when he wrote:

Isaiah 9:6-7 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. {7} Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Jesus Christ is the Beloved of God, God the Son, the Son

of God. He is co-equal with both Father and Spirit, no mere man. If, as the Scripture states, **God is love**, (**1 John 4:8, 16**), then this is **Love manifested for us to see**. If **God is love** then we have proof that this is truth in the Person of Jesus Christ, the **Beloved of God** come to earth for us. The preacher **C.H. Spurgeon** stated⁶:

"... {Jesus} was a mass of love. He was love performing and love suffering. Love made Him live as He did, and love still pervades His nature, He, now, that He lives on high, still loving the sons of men. Since God is love then, and Christ is full of love, His character is suitable to God. You shall not find anything in Christ Jesus that doth not consort with the God-like and the divine. See Him where you will He is humble, and meek, and lowly Even when He puts on the garb of the peasant, "woven from the top throughout" that garment shrouds the Deity, and befits Him better than the purple robe fits Caesar on the throne. "

The Bible declares:

2 Corinthians 8:9^{NIV} For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

⁶ *Accepted In The Beloved*, sermon 3429, October 22, 1914, Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, England.
NIV New International Version of the Scripture

This brings us to our next point:

2. Paul Understood That We Who Believe Are "Beloved" Because of Jesus Christ

FOCAL Ephesians 1:1-5 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: {2} Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. {3} Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: {4} According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: {5} Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

Jesus Christ is God in the flesh Who, becoming a servant, came to this earth, lived - died - and lived again **for us**. Jesus is the **Beloved of God**. The Father nor the Spirit would have allowed Jesus to suffer and die *for no good reason*. Jesus died so that we who believe in Him for salvation **would become the Beloved of God**. Look at how Paul began this letter:

FOCAL Ephesians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, **to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:**

Another version puts it this way:

Ephesians 1:1^{HCSB} Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will: **To the saints and believers in Christ Jesus at Ephesus.**

What makes a *mere mortal* a **Saint**? Is it, as the Catholics teach. after a period of time the Pope *declares your sainthood*? Absolutely not! That word **Saint** means "**a set apart person**". If you have called on Jesus Christ for salvation, if you have believed on Him for eternal life, you are a **set apart person, one of the Beloved of God** because of your relationship with Jesus Christ. Are saints *perfect and sinless*? No, a saint is defined in our text. We read:

FOCAL Ephesians 1:4 ... According as {God} **hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:**

A **Saint** is a person who is **set apart by God**. You are **Chosen in Him**. Because Jesus died for you and you have believed on Him, you are **set apart**. The word "**saint**" literally means "**holy or set apart**". In our Greek text the *exact same word*, **hagios**, is used in verses 1 and 4. In verse 1 it is translated **SAINTS**, but in verse 4 it is translated **HOLY**. In both cases the word means **to be set apart by God**. Since you are **set apart by God** the following practical truths apply:

a. If I am **set apart** because I believed on Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, I am **set apart** no matter what I am currently going through in my life. Paul was in a Roman prison, certainly not an ideal situation to be in. Did Paul consider Himself to be a *Roman prisoner*? Look at what he wrote:

Ephesians 3:1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

Paul didn't focus on the *pity party*. He looked at his relationship to Jesus Christ, God the Son, and since he reckoned that he belonged to Jesus he said "**I am the prisoner of Jesus Christ**". Paul was in prison because Jesus wanted him to be there. God put him there, the same **Beloved of God** had him in this place. His imprisonment was *not purposeless*, but Paul said that he was **the prisoner of Jesus Christ FOR YOU GENTILES**. He had a purpose. God had taken the vast power that was the Roman Empire and, submitting that power to Himself, He was using Rome to help Paul *spread the Gospel of salvation*.

Think of this, and its implications in our lives. Paul did not look for a way out of prison - an understandable and certainly *human* response - but Paul continued to serve Jesus *even in the midst of this suffering*. Look further in Ephesians. Further on Paul tells the believers at Ephesus:

Ephesians 4:1-3 I therefore, the prisoner of

the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, {2} With all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love; {3} Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Who imprisoned Paul? Was it Rome? Absolutely not! God the Son imprisoned Paul. He was **the prisoner of the Lord**. What did Paul want the Church at Ephesus to do? To get a *posse together*, to *gather up weapons and come and save him*? No! Paul didn't even ask that they pray that this circumstance be relieved. Paul wanted the Ephesians to do as he was doing, to **walk worthy of their calling**. Because of **Jesus Christ the Beloved of God** we who believe are **also the Beloved of God**. Walk in love one toward another, **endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**. Yet one more text on the *Pauline Understanding of Holiness*. Paul tells the Ephesian believers:

Ephesians 6:18-20 Praying always with all prayer and supplication **in the Spirit**, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; {19} **And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, {20} For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.**

What did Paul ask his **fellow Beloved believers to do** for him? Did Paul ask that they pray that he be released from imprisonment? No! Paul considered himself an **ambassador in bonds**. Though he was imprisoned, he was imprisoned *at Christ's discretion*. Paul wanted the Ephesians to **pray in the Spirit that he would openly and effectively preach the Gospel of salvation to all he came in contact with**. Paul looked at everything that happened in His life and reckoned that every event, every trial, every tribulation, every temptation, no matter from whom it came, that these things all came into his life **through Christ Jesus the Beloved of God**.

b. If I am the Beloved of God by faith **in the Beloved of God**, then **God has a purpose for my life**. Look at what Paul said:

FOCAL Ephesians 1:3-5 .. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ**: {4} According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: {5} **Having predestinated⁷ us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure**

⁷ Aorist Active Participle G4309, προοριζω, proorizō, *pro-or-id'-zo*, From G4253 and G3724; to *limit in advance*, that is, (figuratively) *predetermine*: - determine before, ordain, predestinate. (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries)

of his will,

If you have been saved, you are a **predestined people**. That word means exactly what it says. **Predestined** means to **determine beforehand**. You are, like Paul, in the Plan of God. God has a goal, a purpose for your life. You are **predestined unto the adoption of children by Christ to Himself**. One day you will stand in Heaven with our elder Brother Jesus Christ. Because He has made payment for your sins one day Heaven shall be yours. Our destiny is certain. Our end has already been written in stone, literally *written in the Rock that is Christ*:

1 Peter 2:3-6 **If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. {4} To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, {5} Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. {6} Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.**

We may not be able to change our circumstances, but we can live for Jesus! In this world you, like Paul, may suffer, but look upward. Jesus died for you, so that you can live *forever*. Jesus rose from the grave for you, so that *death no longer holds a stinger over your life*.

You are the Beloved of God because you have *believed on the Beloved of God*. When someone hurts you, respond like the Beloved would:

Romans 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

You belong to God, He shall repay. Forgive, love, let Christ love through you. If you are the Beloved of God by faith in *The Beloved of God* then turn away from other gods:

1 Corinthians 10:14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

My purpose is not to chase after the gods of this world, but it is to tell others about Jesus Christ my Lord. My purpose is not to be the *judge of all*, for there is one Judge, and that is THE Beloved of God. Even in the midst of trials our pattern should be that of Jesus Christ:

Colossians 3:12-14 ^{NIV} Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. {13} Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the

Lord forgave you. {14} And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

If God is Love, and Jesus Christ the Beloved of God, then those that belong to Jesus *will love*. It does not matter who is right and who is wrong - so many times Israel died on that stake! What matter is *Who loves like Christ*. The Pharisees were exacting in their parsing of the Word of God, and died going to a place of eternal damnation. They focused on the written Word, but rejected the Living Word.

Take heed that you do not do the same.

C. Seeing that the Beloved of God is eternal, never give up. Keep on believing and working for Jesus no matter where you may find yourself at. The Scripture says:

1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

We do an eternal work for an Eternal Jesus. Keep on believing, keep on working, keep on doing what He has told you to do. We are called to:

**Galatians 6:9 ... not be weary in well doing:
for in due season we shall reap, if we faint
not.**

It is good to remember that Moses died in sight of the Promised Land because he lost hope. We may blame Israel for his failure, but in reality God holds each of us accountable to follow Him *no matter what*. God has proven Himself faithful at all times. We need to believe this, to do what we're supposed to do, and to *move on!*

In the early Church **Paul** and **Matthew** were beheaded, **Barnabas** was burned to death, **Mark** was dragged by horses until he died, **James**, the less, was beaten to death with sticks, **Peter**, **Philip**, and **Andrew** were crucified, **Thomas** was speared until he bled to death, **Luke** was hung by the neck until dead, and **Stephen** was stoned. Each and every one of these men died an uncomfortable way - and yet because they kept on serving **The Beloved of God by faith** they are now in glory where one day we shall be. The works we do for God last. The works we do for **the Beloved** will remain in Eternity, for God is able.

Across from this Church is a hill with many *ebenezers* or stones on it. I want my life to mean more than a stone on a hill. I want my life to make an eternal impact on this world, and the only way my life will make that impact is if I live my life for Jesus and through Jesus. I challenge you all, **finish well**. You are His Beloved - live in Him.

May God touch your hearts with these words.



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