

**Ephesians 1:1-3 (NIV)**

**1** Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

To God's holy people in Ephesus,<sup>[a]</sup> the faithful in Christ Jesus:

<sup>2</sup> Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Praise for Spiritual Blessings in Christ**

<sup>3</sup> 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.

**Footnotes:**

- a. [Ephesians 1:1](#) Some early manuscripts do not have *in Ephesus*.

**Ephesians 1:1-3 (HCSB)**

**Greeting**

**1** Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will:

To the faithful saints in Christ Jesus at Ephesus.<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**God's Rich Blessings**

<sup>3</sup> Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens.

**Footnotes:**

- a. [Ephesians 1:1](#) Other mss omit *at Ephesus*

**Holman Christian Standard Bible - Study Bible<sup>1</sup>**  
*Ephesians 1:1-3*

**1:1 Paul**, the apostle to the Gentiles, wrote the letter to the Ephesians. He may have written it at about the same time as he wrote Colossians and Philemon from prison, most likely in Rome. Paul identified himself as an **apostle**. An apostle was a person whom the resurrected Christ had commissioned and sent on special service, and who was gifted by the Holy Spirit for that service. Paul was carrying out his apostolic commission according to **God's will**. The letter may have been intended for churches throughout Asia Minor, though clearly the more prominent recipients were the **saints** (believers) **at Ephesus**. Ephesus was the most important city in western Asia Minor (present-day Turkey), positioned at an intersection of major trade routes in a significant commercial center. It had a harbor that opened into the Cayster River, which in turn emptied into the Aegean Sea. Ephesus boasted a pagan temple dedicated to the Roman goddess Diana ([Ac 19:23-41](#)). The church there apparently flourished for some time, though not without need for additional exhortation ([Rev 2:1-7](#)).

**1:2** Paul's greeting, though brief, is theologically significant. **Grace** and **peace** are unmerited gifts from God. Paul used the word "grace" 12 times and the word "peace" 8 times. On "grace," see note at [2:4](#).

**1:3-14** Following the greeting in [verses 1-2](#) is a sequence of phrases about the marvelous **spiritual blessing(s)** that belong to the church in Jesus Christ. All of these blessings are assured to each believer, for they flow from God's grace, wisdom, and eternal purpose. These 12 verses form one long sentence in the Greek.

**1:3 Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ:** This section often is called "the doxology" because it recites what God has done and is an expression to Him of worship, praise, and honor. Similar doxologies are found in [2Co 1:3](#) and [1Pe 1:3](#). In this majestic section, Paul wrote of the blessings that belong to the church through the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God has blessed us with all of the blessings in the heavenly realms. These blessings include our union with Christ; being seated with Him in the heavenlies; and our adoption, redemption, and election. All spiritual gifts and service abilities also flow out of these spiritual blessings that God gives to every believer at the time of salvation.

---

1. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Ephesians 1".

**English Standard Version - Study Bible<sup>2</sup>**  
*Ephesians 1:1-3*

**1:1-14 Introduction.** Paul opens his letter with greetings (vv. 1-2) and a lengthy blessing of God (vv. 3-14) where he expresses the two main themes of the letter: Christ has reconciled all of creation and has united the church in himself.

**1:1-2 Greetings.** This salutation is briefer than many in Paul's letters. Paul saves his richest introductory remarks for the long blessing of God in vv. 3-14.

**1:1 apostle.** See note on Rom. 1:1. Paul expresses his authority simply but powerfully: he is an apostle of Christ Jesus. **saints.** The saints ("holy ones" or "consecrated people") are the faithful members of God's people. In Ephesians, Paul clearly uses the term for all members of the church (Eph. 1:15, 18; 2:19; 3:8; 4:12; 6:18), who are directly called to be holy (1:4; 5:3) and are **faithful in Christ Jesus. in Ephesus.** It is best to read these words as original even though they are missing in several early manuscripts. The ESV alternative footnote reading, "saints who are also faithful," is less likely because it is clumsy in Greek and because the phrase "saints who are" normally expects a place name like "in Ephesus," rather than "also faithful." Some scholars who believe Ephesians is a circular letter suggest that the words "in Ephesus" were deleted in the copies that were sent to places outside of Ephesus. On Ephesus, see Introduction: The Ancient City of Ephesus.

**1:3-14 Spiritual Blessings in Christ.** In the original Greek, this section is one long, elegant sentence. Paul shows that the triune God initiated and accomplished cosmic reconciliation and redemption for the praise of his glory.

**1:3 Blessed be.** The blessing that opens Paul's prayer is similar to those that began first-century Jewish prayers that were commonly recited throughout the day (cf. 2 Cor. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3). **in Christ.** Paul's praise emphasizes the mediation of Christ for all God's blessings by repeating that these good things are ours "in Christ" (Eph. 1:3, 9), "in the Beloved" (v. 6), or "in him" (vv. 4, 7, 11, 13). **Spiritual** (Gk. *pneumatikos*) here communicates that the saving gifts of God are conveyed by the Holy Spirit (Gk. *Pneuma*), whose personal presence throughout this age is the guarantee of future heavenly blessings (see "spiritual songs" in 5:19; Col. 3:16). Hence, these blessings are in **heavenly places**, since that is the Christian's future abode in imperishable glory when he is resurrected in a spiritual body through the "last Adam," the "life-giving spirit" (1 Cor. 15:40, 44-50).

---

2. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Ephesians 1".

## NLT Life Application Study Bible<sup>3</sup>

### *Ephesians 1:1-3*

**1:1** Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesian believers and all other believers to give them in-depth teaching about how to nurture and maintain the unity of the church. He wanted to put this important information in written form because he was in prison for preaching the Good News and could not visit the churches himself. The words "in Ephesus" are not present in some early manuscripts. Therefore, this was very likely a circular letter. It was first sent to Ephesus and then circulated to neighboring local churches. Paul mentions no particular problems or local situations, and he offers no personal greetings.

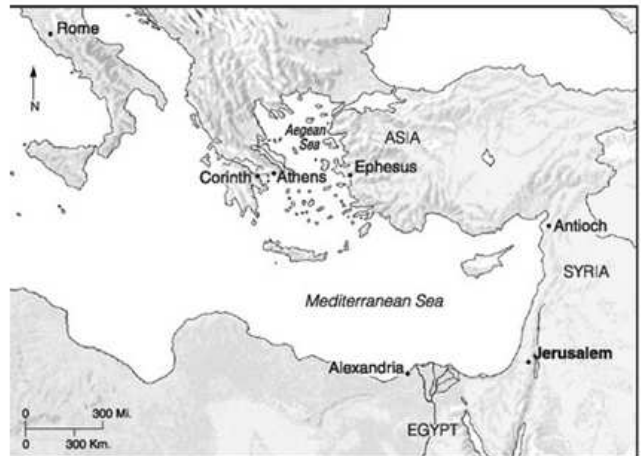
**1:1** Paul had been a Christian for nearly 30 years. He had taken three missionary trips and established churches all around the Mediterranean Sea. When he wrote Ephesians, Paul was under house arrest in Rome (see [Acts 28:16ff](#)). Though a prisoner, he was free to have visitors and write letters. For more information on Paul, see his Profile in [Acts 9, p. 1837](#).

**1:1** Ephesus was one of the five major cities in the Roman Empire, along with Rome, Corinth, Antioch, and Alexandria. Paul first visited Ephesus on his second missionary journey ([Acts 18:19-21](#)). During his third missionary journey, he stayed there for almost three years ([Acts 19](#)). Paul later met again with the elders of the Ephesian church at Miletus ([Acts 20:16-38](#)). Ephesus was a commercial, political, and religious center for all of Asia Minor. The temple to the Greek goddess Artemis (Diana is her Roman equivalent) was located there.

**1:1** "Faithful followers of Christ Jesus"—what an excellent reputation! Such a label would be an honor for any believer. What would it take for others to characterize you as a faithful follower of Christ Jesus? Hold fast to your faith, one day at a time; faithfully obey God, even in the details of life. Then, like the Ephesians, you will be known as a person who is faithful to the Lord.

Ephesus was a strategic city, ranking in importance with Alexandria in Egypt and Antioch of Syria as a port. It lay on the most western edge of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), the most important port on the Aegean Sea on the main route from Rome to the east.

**1:3** "Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms" means that in Christ we have all the benefits of knowing God—being chosen for salvation, being adopted as his children, forgiveness, insight, the gifts of the Spirit, power to do God's will, the hope of living forever with Christ. Because we have an intimate relationship with Christ, we can enjoy these blessings now. The "heavenly realms" means that these blessings are eternal, not temporal. The blessings come from Christ's spiritual realm, not the earthly realm of the goddess Artemis. Other references to the heavenly realms in this letter include [1:20](#); [2:6](#); [3:10](#). Such passages reveal Christ in his victorious, exalted role as ruler of all.



*Location of Ephesus*

## Life Essentials Study Bible<sup>4</sup>

# A Principle to Live By Ephesians #1: Communities of Faith

*from Ephesians 1:1-2*

**To apply most biblical exhortations in the New Testament effectively, we must think in terms of local churches.**

It appears Paul intended this letter to be read in other churches throughout Asia Minor. This explains why he used the Greek term **ekklesia** (“church”) in a more universal sense ([1:22](#); [3:10,21](#)). However, he was thinking in terms of individual local churches when he wrote,

*From Him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building up itself in love by the proper working of each individual part. ([Eph 4:16](#))*

For Christ-followers to practice this biblical function, they must be able to relate to one another in communities of faith.

Three other pieces of evidence suggest this was a circular letter:

1. The words “at Ephesus” ([1:1](#)) do not appear in the earliest Greek manuscripts.
2. Paul avoided specific issues that related directly to the church in Ephesus.
3. No one is mentioned by name in the church in Ephesus, which is a significant omission since Paul had developed close relationships with the spiritual leaders in this church ([Ac 20:31,36-38](#)). (See [Ac #39: Relationships with One Another, p. 1517.](#))

### Reflection and Response

**As you read about what happened in Ephesus as a result of Paul’s ministry in the school of Tyrannus, how might this explain why someone may have inserted “at Ephesus” in the introduction to this letter? (See [Ac 19:8-10](#).)**

---

4. Gene Getz, *Life Essentials Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2011), *WORDsearch CROSS e-book*, 1625.