

Ephesians 1:1a(ESV) ¹Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.

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

Paul was in prison when he wrote the letter that we find in our Bibles called Ephesians. This letter was not only read in Ephesus but also to the churches in the surrounding region. Chained as a prisoner Paul did not let his circumstances discourage him to the point of keeping him from being useful to God. Being strengthened by God in the inner man, powered by the Holy Spirit inside of his soul, Paul wrote letters to various churches to encourage them to stay faithful to Jesus and to give them God's wisdom, which is always greatly needed in the church. I am always impressed with the fact that while in prison chained to a guard 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, Paul does not wallow in self-pity, become bitter toward those who were glad he was in prison, or sink into paralyzing discouragement, but uses his time wisely to share the Good News of Jesus Christ by writing letters. Paul also led the prison guards to Christ. In chains the Gospel still came out of Paul for he could never keep inside what God had given to him. He was the apostle to the Gentiles. Billy Graham once said that it was to our benefit that Paul was put in prison so many times, otherwise Paul would never have taken the time to stop and write all of these letters that we find in the New Testament; I quite agree.

This leads me to my first point. 1. *God has positioned you right where you are to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.* God has you exactly where he wants you to do ministry that brings glory to Christ. Paul did some of his finest ministry while positioned in prison writing letters as inspired by the Holy Spirit. I cannot say this enough; it is the power of the Holy Spirit that motivates us, prompts us, moves us, pushes us to do Christian acts of kindness, Christian acts of ministry so those around us can be touched by Jesus. You do not have to be in chains in order to write letters or to do specific acts of ministry to help others. You are free to be who you

are in Christ exactly where God has placed you. The Holy Spirit inside of you has much for you to do serving the Lord Jesus Christ day in and day out. God has placed you right where He wants you to be so you can be Christ's witness; yes, this brings glory to Christ. You are the only one in the entire universe that is gifted and wired by God the way you are in order to be used of God right where Christ has placed you. God has positioned you right where you are.

Pastor, you are messing with me right now. What do you mean God has positioned me to do ministry right where I am. Pastor it is your job to do ministry, not mine. Don't tell me to do ministry. To you I say, the Lord Jesus put you right where you are to be a witness for Jesus sake. The letter of Ephesians begins with a name and the name is Paul. Before Paul became a Christian his name was Saul. He was a very learned man and he used his great knowledge to defend the Jewish faith to the detriment of the Christian faith. He felt his calling from God was to literally arrest Christians, imprison them, and even have them put to death. Then one day on the way to Damascus, God got a hold of Saul's life and brought him to faith in Jesus Christ. Saul became a changed man and his name became Paul. Paul is an example of a changed life, changed by God.

My second point is this. Every believer in Christ is a changed person. God has literally changed you from the inside out. The Holy Spirit took up permanent residence and changed you so now your focus is on Jesus and living to please Jesus. You think differently than a non-believer. God uses your position in life, wherever or whatever it is, to be a solid Christian witness. You can do this because God has changed your life and given to you the gift of eternal life.

My third point is this, you are called by God to serve. When God positions you to a particular place, neighborhood, workplace, school, or whatever, it means God has called you to minister the love of Christ right where you are at. Your calling is where God has placed you and you will answer to God one day for how you served the Lord Jesus, how you did ministry, how

faithful you were to your calling where God positioned you, and how you used your changed life to display the life of Jesus.

In the book of Ephesians Paul uses the phrase “in Christ” more than in any of his other writings. Yes, God can use you where God has positioned you because God has changed your life and now you live every day in Christ. When you wake up tomorrow morning, Lord willing, you are living your life in Christ. Christ is alive in you and you represent Christ all day long where you are positioned by God with a changed life. To live in Christ is to know who you are in Christ so you can be faithful to your calling in the way that God wishes to use you.

I know of a person whose calling in life is to take care of his wife. This man lives on the west coast. For years this particular husband has been displaying the love of Jesus toward his wife whose care is completely dependent on him. She can do nothing on her own. The husband is a changed man because of the work of Christ inside of him. He is his wife’s full-time care giver and I call a man like that a true saint. In such a situation it is much harder on the caregiver than the one receiving the care. I truly respect this man because of his witness of Jesus Christ to his wife and family. Jesus said of Himself, “The Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many.” Do you hear what I am trying to say? We are here to serve Christ, with changed lives, by serving those where God has positioned us, being faithful to our calling to serve. Putting in plainly it is called living in Christ. Christ is alive in you and has so much He wants to do through you. The Holy Spirit has given you spiritual gifts to carry out the work of your calling and it is a work that no one else can do, only you. It is called living for Jesus because Jesus is alive in you.

Pastor this sounds good, but I don’t know what to do. Here are a few things we can all do or to put it better, here are several things Christ can do through us as we live in Christ.

1. Show Christian concern in a deliberate intentional way. Ask a fellow worker or student a question at work or school that shows you care about their lives and listen to their answer. If

possible, tell that person you will pray for them or pray on the spot. Bring a neighbor a meal or two when there is a death in the family or a new mother coping with being a new mother, or a co-worker who looks stressed to the max. One time I walked into a pastor's office, a pastor who I had never met and said, "You look like cow manure." "You look like you have the weight of the world on your shoulders." Within a few minutes we were praying for God's help, which was very much needed. I am not suggesting you tell people they look like cow manure, but you can figure out your own way to reach out in Christian love. Please show Christian concern in a deliberate intentional way that is unique to your spiritual gifts and God-given personality; only you can do it in your own unique way. No one else in the universe is wired by God the way you are.

Paul was positioned in prison and called of God to do ministry from that very spot. 2. Where God has positioned you and placed His calling on you let them know you are excited about a particular worship service, a winter jam concert, a Christian movie at the theatre, or a Bible study group where God's Presence was strongly felt. Tell them something positive about the church. You may end up listening to why they left the church and God can use you as a healing agent. Please invite them to join you in worship.

3. Another way the Lord Jesus will touch lives through you is when you pray something like this. "Lord Jesus, please prompt me today to do a spontaneous act of ministry." When you pray like this you are asking God to use you with your Holy Spirit-given gifts and God-given personality. You may not even realize you did an act of ministry until you look back on the day and then remember something that happened so easily that it was just natural to who you are.

As we work our way through Ephesians, I know God has so much to say to us out of His holy love. Today was just a beginning focusing on who authored Ephesians, Paul, a man with a changed life who was positioned by God to serve the Lord Jesus all over the Roman empire,

who lived his life in Christ, being faithful to his calling day in and day out with the spiritual gifts God has given to him within the context of his own personality. Amen and Amen.