



Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus is one of incredible value to Christians. It's chock-full of doctrinal truths about the gospel of Christ, His love for us, and our responsibilities in the faith. Today I'd like to look at Paul's opening statement in Ephesians 1, and explore the humility of his calling.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [Eph 1:1-2](#)

Before his conversion, Paul's life was one of outward devotion to God, yet riddled with great pride in religious accomplishments. He was a strict disciple of the Mosaic law, became a Pharisee, trained under Gamaliel (one of the most revered Jewish teachers), and was absolutely zealous for God and the Torah ([Acts 22:3](#)). In his zeal, he persecuted Christians and even condoned their murder, as he saw them as a threat to law and their claims as blasphemous ([Acts 8:1](#)). He was very proud of his position and religious standing, as he later lamented in his letter to the church in Philippi:

If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. [Phil 3:4b-6](#)

In this fervor for the law, Paul headed to Damascus in order to further imprison and persecute Christians ([Acts 9:1-2](#)), and on the way there he literally met the risen Christ, and everything changed in a blinding instant:

As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do." [Acts 9:3-6](#)

You might say that meeting Jesus was like eating a huge slice of humble pie. Until then Paul assumed he was serving God, but he was actually working against Him. In this roadside conversion, Paul received his life's true calling: to preach Christ's gospel to the Gentiles. For a Jewish Pharisee and fanatic for the law, it probably couldn't get any worse. He was told he would go to the people he reviled and preach a message that he detested. This would require enormous humility and submission, and the realization that he had been dead wrong.

But Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, obeyed and turned his passionate efforts toward boldly proclaiming the good news from heaven, just as Christ commanded him ([Acts 9:15](#)). And in



turn, Paul became the greatest apostle for Christ ever, and it is entirely probable that you and I heard the gospel because of Paul's work.

In the opening of Ephesians, Paul reminded readers of this divine calling. No longer was he striving to keep the law of Moses as a means to be in right standing with God, but instead he saw that God chose him to do this work, and as we get deeper into Ephesians we see how Paul took no credit for what God had done through him.

Herein we see an example of the humility required of Christians. We may feel we have a calling to do something great for God, but if we are not working with the Holy Spirit in prayer, reverence, and complete submission to God's will, we very well may be working against Him. Paul serves as an ideal model for how effective our service can be when we say, "Lord, thy will be done," and allow Christ to take us where He chooses. It may be a very unassuming or perhaps even uncomfortable calling, but when we submit in humility, God can do amazing things through His fleshly servants. And there is truly no greater privilege than to be called a servant of Lord Most High.

~Associate Pastor Jeremy Preece