

# EPHESIANS

Ephesians is a letter written by Paul to the church of Ephesus in AD 61.

Ephesians is considered one of the prison epistles (i.e. written by Paul while imprisoned in Rome during his first imprisonment)

Paul was not trying to address any specific issue with the church at Ephesus.

The letter was intended to be a circular letter.

## Ephesus

- Christianity probably first came to Ephesus through Aquilla and Priscilla when Paul visited during his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary visit (Acts 18:18-19)
- During Paul's 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary visit, he stayed in Ephesus for about 3 years.
- The city was a commercial, political, religious center and a central trading location.
- Paul, Timothy (I Tim. 1:3) and eventually the apostle John had a share in leading the church in Ephesus.

Theme - God's eternal purpose to establish and complete His body, the church of Christ.

Major Topics Discussed in the Book:

- Predestination
- Christ's headship over the body
- The church as the building and temple of God
- The Mystery of Christ
- Spiritual Gifts
- The Church as the bride of Christ

**Global metaphor for Ephesians:** God is the Head Coach and Paul is the Assistant Coach. God is the head and Paul follows God. Paul prepares the people to use their God given gifts in service and encourages them to find their calling and pursue it. God/Paul then equip the saints to engage in spiritual battle – God has provided the armor, while Paul the instruction on how to use the armor.

## Chapter 1 – Chosen and Sealed

- Paul opens the letter with a greeting to the saints.
- We have been blessed in the heavenly realms
- Paul in Chapter 1 reminds the church of their position with Jesus, prior to looking at the requirements of the Christian walk
  - We are Chosen (4)
  - We are Predestined (5)
  - We are accepted (6)
  - We are redeemed (7)
  - We are informed (9)
  - We are heirs (11)
  - We are sealed (13)

- In the second half of the first chapter, Paul demonstrates thanksgiving and offers a prayer.
- The mystery – How Jews and Gentiles can be joint heirs (spoken in the OT, but revealed in the NT)
- Paul teaches the concept that we need to know who we are in Christ.
- The church is the body of Christ

## **Chapter 2 – God’s Plan for Reconciliation**

### **Made Alive in Christ (1-10)**

- We were dead in our transgressions and sins and it is the spirit of disobedience that continues to rule those that are lost.
- We all used to be in this state.
- God’s great love for us, and abundant Mercy, provided the opportunity to be made alive in Christ and we were saved by grace!
- We were raised with Christ and sealed with Him and this will become evident to us, in time, as we see His kindness demonstrated through His grace in our lives.
- We are saved by grace through faith! Not because of your actions, but because it is a gift from God!
- We are God’s workmanship, to do good works – God’s intention for us!
- In recognizing who we are in Christ, we must identify with His life, death, resurrection and ascension. This is how we practically do this:
  - Renew our perspective – Think like God thinks (Col. 3:1-2)
  - Release our past – We must let go of our old patterns and let the past die. (Gal. 2:20)
  - Remember our purpose – stay focused on why God left us on the Earth (Eph. 1:3-12)

### **One in Christ (11-22)**

- Paul goes to remind us of where we came from. Almost in an attempt of keeping us humble, now that we know who we are and what we have been gifted. In referencing Jewish and non-Jewish custom Paul continues to break down barriers, stating that all of us started from a dead in sin state. Be careful of spiritual pride! We should be mindful of the gift and encourage others in the way.
- We have been brought near to God
- Jesus came and preached peace...what are you exemplifying?
- Through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit = the Godhead confirmed & this is available to the Jew and the Gentile. Only Christ can break down barriers.
- The cross should be our focus in our interaction with others.... The grace he showed us.... That should help eliminate the barriers that we have with others and facilitate reconciliation
- Our citizenship and rights have been equated.
- We are all being built into the temple with Christ as the cornerstone. Is your temple worth the Holy Spirit living in?
- After explaining our deliverance from darkness and transformation into new persons and into a building, Paul wanted the Ephesians to engage in service
  - Everyone wants to feel worthwhile
  - Everyone needs encouragement
  - People look to the leader before they accept the plan
  - Most people don’t know how to be successful
  - People who have bought in will move once they receive permission and are equipped.

## **Ephesians 3 – Equal in the Body**

### **Paul Reaching Out to the Gentiles (1-13)**

Paul wants to make sure that the believers in Ephesus are equipped and recognize the power that is available to them. He wants them to understand what infinite resources are at their disposal. We should be doing the same, however we can't make people accept their position in God or walk in it!

- Paul speaks to having the understanding the identity of Christ and the significance of the Grace of God.
- The mystery – not mystical, but something that yet to be revealed. And we would have the advantage of understanding the mystery as a result of Paul's understanding and explanation. This is a blessing as prior generations didn't have the advantage of this information.
  - It was already foretold in the Old Testament that Jews would be blessed.
  - The mystery that was revealed is that Jews & Gentiles would be joint heirs in the one body of Christ. (Realize, they didn't know this in OT times.)
- Paul recognizes that he has been charged with sharing this revelation that there are limitless riches in Christ Jesus. The charge was given by Jesus to Paul as a gift of God's grace, through His power! Not of Paul's power, but Jesus' power. (Phil. 4:13)
- Paul makes it clear that we all have a hope in Jesus Christ! This wasn't portrayed in the OT!
- Paul, at this point in his life clearly recognizes the calling on his life and his purpose. Paul is to be a teacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and he was to be a missionary.
- Paul understands that the revelation given to him by Christ would permit him to inform the elect in heavenly realms (orders of angelic beings.)
- Paul also makes it clear that we can go to Christ for ourselves, no longer does the priest have to go in our stead. We can do this because of the sacrificial acts of Jesus and through our unwavering faith in Him.
- Paul makes it clear not to be dismayed as a result of his personal sufferings, he is doing the will of God for His Glory! (Luke 18:1; Gal. 6:9; II Thes. 3:13; II Cor. 4:1, 16)

### **An Ephesian Prayer (14-21)**

In understanding our position in God, Paul passionately prays for the Ephesian church to understand the depth of Christ's love and what is available to us as a result of such. What are you passionate over?

- Paul resumes with his original thought.
- Paul prays that the Ephesians would be strengthened with God's power through the Holy Spirit working in them, so Christ will dwell in their hearts through faith.
- Paul prayed that they would be rooted and established in love! The prayer is that Christ would dwell (be comfortable and at home) in our hearts. This is the key by which they would all be able to work together in the power of Christ.
- This approach will help us to understand the dimensions of Christ love for us and the love we should have for one another and be filled with Christ love.
- The closing of his prayer acknowledges Christ's ability to do super abundantly more than we can even imagine based on his Holy Spirit working in us..... that means the love has to be demonstrated in accordance with Christ's character, and we can have all of His will.

## **Ephesians 4 – Unity in the Body of Christ**

Paul begins to focus on the practices of the believers, now that they know who they are in Christ.

### **In Relation to Other Believers (1- 6)**

- Paul begins practical application of how the church should be working together in unity:
- Paul suggests what the character behavior should be for the believer:
  - Completely humble and gentle
  - Patient, bearing one another in love
  - Keep the unity of the Spirit through peace
- One body, one Spirit – Through the baptism of the Holy Spirit we experience the unity in the Body of Christ.
- The Godhead is explained – Oneness of the Faith in four relationships.
- Paul builds the unity of the church amid diversity in the church
  - Paul does this by demonstrating the attitude of the individual (1-3)
  - Paul then discusses the attitude of the corporate body (4-6)

### **In Relation to Spiritual Gifts (7-16)**

- Christ gave all of us grace and gifts with it.
  - Paul is the coach that is building a team
  - **Are you a strong individual contributor or are you a Leader?**
- The process by which he provided grace and gifts to all, is through the process of his death, burial and resurrection.
- Paul calls out the spiritual gifts (Spiritual Leadership Roles) in the body of Christ:
  - Apostles – “one sent forth” as an ambassador who bears a message and who represents the one who sent them. They pioneer and establish new works and new leaders.
  - Prophets – those given direct revelation by God to communicate to God’s people to inspire, correct and motivate.
  - Evangelists – preachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ, sharing His Word with believers and non-believers. They also train others in the role.
  - Pastors – One who shepherds, guides, and guards God’s people as they serve.
  - Teachers – One who trains God’s people in the truth and teaches others to do so.
- The purpose of the roles is to prepare God’s people for works of service in order to further develop the body of Christ.
- As a result of the spiritual instruction and maturity, we should be grounded in Christ and we can speak the truth in Love!
- The Love of Christ grows the body, holds it together, and compels the body parts to work together.

### **In Relation to the Former Life (17-32)**

- Paul starts a thought where he concludes what the Christian life and morals should look like based on membership in the body of Christ.
- As a New Man, Paul is insisting that Christians put on New Thinking! If not, they will continue in their old ways of trying to satisfy their insatiable flesh.
- The renewing aspect of the Christian journey is an on-going process. Renewing is not completed at the point of infilling of the Holy Spirit!
- We must stop lying to one another and speak truth, without sinful anger.

- We can be angry without sinning, but don't let it fester or we provide space for the Devil to work in our lives (the Devil will work with your minds)
- Stop stealing from God and others!
- Stop tearing each other down! We should be building each other up as there are people listening to what we say about each other.
- The Holy Spirit is grieved by sin. And it appears the sins of the tongue truly pain the Holy Spirit!
- "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." [NIV v32]

## **Ephesians 5 – Love, Light, Wisdom & the Marriage Relationship**

- Paul continues a passage/thought from Ephesians 4:17 (until 6:9) in which he draws the conclusion, in terms of life and morals, that follow from membership in Christ's body.
- In this chapter Paul delves our Christian walks in Love, Light and Wisdom

### **Walk in Love (1-7)**

- We are supposed to imitate Jesus Christ!
- The same way the priests used to offer a sweet-smelling savor to God for the Israelites (Lev. 1:9), Christ offered himself as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God for us!
- Foolish talk or coarse joking = unclean speech, often veiled in double talk
- A greedy person put their things before God.

### **Walk in Light (8-14)**

- Believers will expose the deeds of darkness, but it should be done in love.
- Verse 14 is an appeal to the sinning believer to wake and rise!

### **Walk in Wisdom (15-21)**

- Take a close look at your lifestyle and examine is your business productive. We all get the same amount of time every day, but what do you get done in that time?
  - Evaluate your lifestyle (15)
  - Take advantage of the present (16)
  - Prioritize your tasks by importance (17)
- Paul instructs to be spirit filled [**Controlled**] as an alternative to getting drunk on wine [**Controlled**] (18). Verse (19) speaks to being Spirit led. **What's Controlling You?**
- Paul encourages mutual submission (21)

### **Marriage-Christ and the Church (22-33)**

- Paul starts this section encouraging the women to submit to their husbands.
- Paul moves to charging husbands with loving their wives.
- Paul charges husbands with being Christ-figures in order to execute the love for their wives. Husbands are to provide, teach, cry when necessary, heal, and sacrifice for the family
- Husbands will present their wives blameless, just as Christ does for us.
- husband = spiritual leader = giving of yourself for someone else.
- Husbands have to assume the responsibility for the health and development of our relationships in the home.
- Mystery = the marital relationship should emulate the relationship between Christ (the bridegroom) and the church (His bride)

## **Ephesians 6 – Relationship Management & the Armor of God**

- Paul continues a passage/thought from Ephesians 4:17 (until 6:9) in which he draws the conclusion, in terms of life and morals, that follow from membership in Christ's body.
- In Chapter 5 Paul presented how we are to walk in Love, Light and Wisdom. He concluded with guidance on Marriage-Christ and the Church.
- In this chapter Paul concludes his message to the Ephesian church. He concludes with a message on relationship/communication between parents and children; and Bondservants and Masters. Not overlooking Paul's closing guidance on how to fulfill the direction he provided in this letter – By putting on the *Whole Armor of God!*

### **Children and Parents (1-4)**

- A child's obedience to a parent is a part of their obligation to Jesus. This applies regardless of the spiritual state of the parent.
- Paul reminds the church at Ephesus of the first commandment with promise. It speaks to long life with obedience to parents.
- Paul then provides direction to the parents and instructs them not nag or arbitrarily assert authority over children.

### **Bondservants and Masters (5-9)**

- Paul writes to owners and slaves – the passage is not intended to justify slavery!
- The passage on owners and slaves is the modern-day employee/employer relationship.
  - Don't be a pleaser of men (6)
  - Work like you are working for the ever-watching God (7)
  - God rewards our good work (8)

### **The Whole Armor of God (10-20)**

- Paul warns the people about the tough times coming, as he closes – a warning. Satan, an enemy on a mission.
- It's the believer's responsibility to put on the armor!
- Paul provides an approach for how to deal with this adversary. The approach is not dependent on our natural resources, but on God (10).
- God serves as our Protector, Provider, Defender, Deliverer and Director – He supplies all of our needs!
- The belt of truth holds everything together – our integrity (14)
- The breastplate of righteousness protects our heart from Satan (14)
- The gospel provides support and stability to our lives (15)
- The shield of faith quenches the darts (16)
- The helmet guards our mind and thoughts. (17)
- The sword is the Word spoken to our hearts (17)
- Prayer should be consistent and for every occasion in the power of the Spirit [18]
- Paul then tells his readers to put on the whole armor of God, so that they can stand and prevail (11-17). This direction provides the following:
  - A strategy to Win (11-12)
  - Inside information on our enemy (12)
  - Battle resources (13)
  - An instructional manual for how to use our resources (14-17)
  - A communication plan (14-20)
- Paul was concerned about his testimony.



**Concluding Words (21 – 24)**

- Tychicus is the messenger that will communicate about Paul's experiences and so that he will encourage the Ephesian churches.
- Paul wishes Grace and Peace on his brethren in Ephesus with the love of God.

