

Paul's Letter to the

Ephesians

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**A
STUDY
OF
PAUL'S EPISTLE
TO
THE
EPHESIANS**

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Ephesus:

Ephesus was the third largest city in the Roman empire (Population 250,000) in what is today the country of Turkey. In Acts 19 we read about Paul's trip to Ephesus and how the city was full of idolatry, especially the worship of Artemis. Artemis is known as the goddess of wild animals. Daughter of Zeus and sister of Apollo who hunted with a bow and arrow. Ephesus was also famous for magic and sorcery (see Acts 19:19). These are important pieces of information because it helps us to relate to what Christians in Ephesus were dealing with and the pressures they faced from society.

The letter was written by Paul in A.D. 60 to strengthen and encourage the churches in the region. It describes the nature of the church and challenges believers to function as the living body of Christ on earth. Paul has now been a Christian for over 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. Though a prisoner, he was free to have visitors and write letters.

Paul's letter to the Ephesians is different compared to many of the other New Testament letters he wrote. Like Romans, Ephesians was not written so much to address problems in a particular church; more so, it was written to explain some of the great themes and doctrines of Christianity.

Themes in Ephesians:

- **God's purpose.** According to God's eternal, loving plan, He directs, carries out, and sustains our salvation
- **Christ the Center.** Christ is the head of the body, the church, and sustainer of all creation
- **Living Church.** The nature of the church is a living body, a family, a dwelling. God gives believers special abilities by His Holy Spirit to build the church

Question: Do you think the church will survive this pandemic? If so, how will it be different?

- **New Family.** Because God through Christ paid our penalty for sin and forgave us, we have been reconciled—brought near to Him. We are a new society, a new family. Being united with Christ means we are to treat one another as family members

- Christian Conduct. Paul encourages all Christians to wise, dynamic Christian living, for with privileges goes family responsibility. As a new community, we are to live by Christ's new standards.

He begins the first chapter with a warm greeting to those who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus asking God to grant them grace and peace.

Let's begin with Ephesians verses 1 through 12...

Read verses 1 and 2

Question: How would you define a faithful follower of Christ Jesus?

Read verse 3

This verse describes both the kind of blessings and the location of those blessings. These are spiritual blessings which are far better than material blessings. They are higher, better, and more secure than earthly blessings.

Question: What are our spiritual blessings?

See Handout

Read verse 4

Question: How does this verse give credence to we are all saved and don't need to ask God to save us?

Read verse 5

This verse should cause us to leap for joy because we are chosen and not randomly. We are chosen according to God's good pleasure. He adopted us as His own children and made us joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

Question: How does our being chosen for salvation by God relate to our free will and choice?

Read verse 6

Read verse 7

The sacrifice of Jesus' blood speaks to the important truth of redemption and forgiveness.

Read verse 8

The grace God has given us is explained as something poured on in generous amounts. God did not give us the bare minimum amount of grace needed to have access to God. Instead, He piled it abundantly on us. We have more than enough (Ephesians 3:20). In 1 Corinthians 2:9 Paul says, "As it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him.'"

This grace was given abundantly, yet also was not wasted. God is always thoughtful in the way He blesses us. He knows what is best and provides accordingly. Paul also notes in this letter that God gives a Spirit of wisdom (Ephesians 1:17) and that He desires the wisdom of God to be known in the heavenly places (Ephesians 3:10). Insight also comes up again in this letter in 3:4 where Paul speaks of perceiving his insight into the mystery of Christ.

Read verse 9

God's plan could not fully be understood until Christ rose from the dead. His purpose for sending Christ was to unite Jews and Gentiles in one body with Christ as the head. God communicated His wisdom abundantly in the Word of God, and in this He **clearly** conveyed the mystery of His will. God intends that we appreciate His provision of redemption grace. "Made known" is a revelatory concept. His plan of salvation by grace is a carefully designed strategy.

Question:

Do you think nonbelievers understand that God has a plan for their lives?

Do you think Christians fully understand that God has a plan for their lives?

Read verse 10

The emphasis is on God's perfect timing, which brings all of His plans together. A “dispensation” is not a period of time but an **administration** or stewardship of time. A dispensation is a way of life, not primarily a period of time. The Greek word itself means *to manage a household*. It describes the role of a *steward*. A dispensation is an order of things, a system or a way of doing things. God had a different way of life under Moses than He does today in the economy of grace.

There is a difference between an age and a dispensation. An age deals with time, whereas a dispensation relates to a way of life, an **economy**. Christians now live in the economy of grace, an institution of belief that orients around grace. Israel lived under the economy of law. The church lives in the economy of grace.

The “fullness of times” is the millennial kingdom where Christ will gain **ultimate** victory in time and space. Everything will be restored and brought together under Christ at that point. Jesus will directly rule over everything in heaven and earth ([He 2:8](#)). Time is moving toward an epoch when every knee will bow to Jesus and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord ([Phil 2:9-11](#)).

“The fullness of times” refers to the termination of a season and the beginning of a new one—the end of the law and the beginning of the dispensation of grace. Jesus will fulfill God’s **purpose** in time and space for creation.

Read verse 11

Paul next transitions to the idea of inheritance. An inheritance was of great importance in ancient society. Most people were in the same trade as their parents, and had little or no upward mobility regarding careers. A wealthy inheritance was greatly desired. What inheritance did Paul have in mind? The believer's inheritance is two-fold. First, it means becoming a child of God; this gives us the right to expect an inheritance. Second, we gain eternity with the Lord, dwelling in His righteousness for all time.

Paul again links the concepts of predestination and the will of God. Paul took great confidence in knowing that God works out all things for the good of those who believe in Him ([Romans 8:28](#)). This was based both upon the overall teaching of

Scripture as well as Paul's personal life experiences. He had endured much hardship as well as joy, knowing God would care for his needs in any and every circumstance (Philippians 4:10-20).

Paul's intent here is to point out how it was Jews who were the first to accept the gospel, according to the plan of God, and for His glory (Ephesians 1:12).

Unfortunately, most of Israel rejected Jesus as the Messiah. As a result, the gospel was spread to the Gentiles (Ephesians 1:13), who share in the same inheritance.

We make our best decisions when we understand God's ultimate plan for us.

Our inheritance is another indication of the wonderful grace of Jesus. Because God identifies us with Christ, we should identify with His life ([1 Jn 2:6](#)). We are to extend mercy like He extended mercy; we are to love like He loved.

One day God will reward us with an inheritance that we do not deserve. We will inherit millennial blessings with Jesus ([Ro 8:17](#); [1 Co 3:21-23](#)).

We make our best decisions when we fully understand God's comprehensive plan for the world. This requires a comprehensive understanding of the Word of God.

Since God controls all events of history, He inexorably moves those who receive Christ toward their eternal lot.

Read verse 12

¹² **that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.**

Verse 12 defines the Jew's **incorporation** "in Christ"; that is, into the church. Both Jews and Gentiles hold equal status before God forever.

¹² **that**

Speaking of our inheritance of holding the same status before God as Jesus holds, we should praise God's **glory** in doing this.

we [emphatic, referring to Jews] **who first trusted in Christ**

The word "we" is emphatic, indicating God placed **Jews** in the church. Jewish believers (including Paul) who first trusted in Christ should praise God's glory for His incorporating them into the church.

should be to the praise of His glory.

We praise God's glory because of our **position** in Christ. God's glory is the ultimate purpose of the believer. God deserves full credit for our status of salvation.

All believers, whether Jew or Gentile, should give God full credit for our status with Him.

God's glory is the ultimate purpose of redemption. If Christians are to live the Christian life properly by glorifying God in their lives, they have to think about God's attributes and virtues.

One purpose of redemption is that man would be restored to the image of God. One purpose of creation is that we should bear the image of God. Salvation's goal and the goal of creation merge in redemption.

Is 43:²¹ This people I have formed for Myself; They shall declare My **praise**.

End Session One Ephesians Chapter 1 verses 1-12.