

“Introduction to Ephesians”

Introductions: Today we have a blessed privilege of embarking into a new study. For many weeks and months, we are going to be looking at the book of Ephesians. In this letter we shall see the riches of the believer. There have been many people who have lived on this earth that lived a very difficult life when they did not have to.

I had an uncle who lived like a hobo. He lived in a one room apartment and often did not eat the proper food and many times even went hungry. He showered very little, his clothing was dirty, he drove an old Ford Comet that sounded like it was going to die at any moment. He was my mom’s brother and she would often invite him for a meal, and he would come and eat like it was the last meal he would ever receive.

When he died it was discovered that bank account was in the triple digit figures. He had hundreds of thousands of dollars. He had a chest full of money which he kept at the foot of his bed that was too heavy to lift.

The point is there was absolutely no reason for him to live the way he did. He just would not use the finances which he had. This all reminds me of so many believers. We have so many riches in Christ, but many believers never tap into the unlimited resources. Our study of the book of Ephesians is going to help us all see the wealth of riches which we have in Jesus Christ.

The book of Ephesians can be divided into two parts. Chapters 1-3 are Doctrinal and chapters 4-6 are Practical. In other words, in 1-3 we see the Truth of who we are in Christ then in 4-6 we will learn how to live in the Truth of 1-3.

Notice Ephesians 1:3

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

Ephesians 4:1

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

EPHESIANS 1 - 3	EPHESIANS 4 - 6
Spiritual Wealth	Spiritual Walk

The Position of the Believer	The Practice of the Believer
Doctrine	Duty
Christian Blessings	Christian Behavior
Work of Christ In Us	Work of Christ Through Us
Heavenly Standing	Earthly Walk
Identity	Responsibility
Position of the Believer	Practice of the Believer

Before we step into the letter, we need some background information that will help us greatly as we work our way through this letter.

Let me raise a question about the church at Ephesus, "What do we know about the church?"

"The Church"

The church at Ephesus was started on Paul's 2nd missionary journey. After Paul had spent 18 months in Corinth he then traveled to Ephesus with Aquila and Priscilla. Paul stayed only for a short time promising to return. He left Aquila and Priscilla in the city of Ephesus. Paul then returned on his 3rd missionary journey and he then stayed for three years.

Acts 19:8-10

⁸ And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

⁹ But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.

¹⁰ And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

Acts 20:31

³¹ Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

"The City"

The population at that time was approximately 300,000 people. Many of the streets were lined with marble. It had public baths and an underground sewer system, a large public library, a medical college with renowned doctors, and an amphitheater that would hold 25,000 people.

The temple of the goddess Diana regarded as one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world was located there. It was supported by 127 pillars. Each pillar was 60 feet tall. It was about 425ft. long by 220ft. wide and adorned with great sculptures and art work.

Diana was known as a fertility goddess and drew people from all over the world. The making and selling of images of the goddess Diana and metal trinkets of the temple was a major business in the city. Paul's ministry had a very negative effect on the silversmiths' trade. The city also had many magicians and other forms of divination.

"The Letter"

The letter of Ephesians was written while Paul was in prison.

Ephesians 3:1

*For this cause I Paul, **the prisoner** of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,*

Paul saw himself as a prisoner of Jesus Christ, but he had been placed in prison by Nero the Emperor.

This letter was written because of an increase in the number of Gentiles in the church.

Acts 17:1-4

Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:

² And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,

³ Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

⁴ And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; **and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.**

So, this church at Ephesus is more than 90% Gentile. Therefore, this letter is going to be different from the early letters of Paul. The early letters were written in the transition period and the transition was from Law to Grace. In Paul's early epistles there was a great deal of Jewish influence in the church and so Paul dealt with signs such as tongues, healing, and miracles. Remember what Paul wrote concerning tongues?

2 Corinthians 14:22a

²² Wherefore **tongues are for a sign**, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not:

Now let me show you another verse.

1 Corinthians 1:22

²² For **the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:**

Now as the Gentiles increased in the church Paul's ministry progressed toward wisdom principles because the Gentiles sought wisdom.

The letter to the church at Ephesus then is addressed mainly to Gentiles and that brought to Paul another obstacle. How was he going to ground the Gentiles? What was Paul to teach them to give them stability? When he taught the Jews, he could build on their knowledge of the Old Testament, but the Gentiles did not have that knowledge.

So here in Ephesians Paul will take them back to Eternity Past to show them God's Eternal Purpose.

Ephesians 1:4, 11

⁴ According as he hath chosen us in him **before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

¹¹ In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

Ephesians 3:9-11

⁹ And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

¹⁰ To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

¹¹ According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

So, in chapters 1-3 he is going to instruct them in Doctrine so as to ground them.

Ephesians 4:14

¹⁴ That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

I. The Greeting

Notice Ephesians 1:1

Paul begins the letter by identifying himself as an Apostle by the will of God. This was not a statement of boasting but it was a statement to establish his authority in teaching the Word of God. He had not appointed himself to be an Apostle, but God chose him to be an Apostle.

Application:

Let me just make a quick application here. Paul had persecuted the church severely before he was saved. God then reached down in the middle of Paul's sin and saved him and called him to be an Apostle. Here was a man who was really a terrorist and yet he was used by God to reach the world with the Gospel. I point this out because I want you to see that it does not matter what your past is God can use you to reach others if you are willing to repent and give your life to Him.

Let us notice how Paul identifies the believers who would receive this letter. The titles would certainly serve as party of the grounding of the Gentiles.

1. Saints

Notice Ephesians 1:1

This may come as a shock to some people but every person who is saved is a SAINT. We do not earn our SAINTHOOD as some teach. We are SAINTS because of our standing and not because of our state. In other words, the word SAINT does not describe our practice but our position. Listen how one man defines a saint:

"The word for SAINT has the idea of taking something filthy, washing it and setting it apart as something brand new and useful for a different purpose. What a beautiful picture of our salvation in Christ of salvation. We were dead in our trespasses and sins, filthy with sin as it were, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit we were saved. We were washed in the blood of Christ and set apart to God."

Let me show you why God can call us SAINTS.

Romans 3:22-24

²² *Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:*

²³ *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

²⁴ *Being **justified** freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:*

When we placed our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, God removed all sin from our account and imputed to our account His own righteousness. Therefore, we are JUSTIFIED which means we are DECLARED RIGHTEOUS.

That is now our standing before God, so He does not see us in our sin, but He sees us covered in His own righteousness. Therefore, we are SAINTS.

Now while the word SAINT does not refer to our practice our practice should reflect our standing in God's righteousness.

"A saint is like a boat -- the boat's purpose is fulfilled when it is in the water, but its function and usefulness deteriorates when water gets in the boat. So too for saints when too much of the world gets into them. Saints must keep their "vessels" in the water of this world but not let the water of the world get into their "vessel!"

Paul gave a similar thought when writing to Timothy:

2 Timothy 2:21-22

²¹ *If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.*

²² *Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*

This brings me to the next word of identity.

II. The Faithful

Notice Ephesians 1:1 again.

To fully understand this title let me share the words of two men. Listen to what Phillips says concerning the city:

"Ephesus rivaled Corinth as the "filth capital" of the Roman world. People from all over the world came to Ephesus to see the temple of Artemis and to patronize the sacred prostitutes whose services were offered as the consummation of worship. Sin was at the very heart of religion in Ephesus, as it is to this day in Hinduism and other Eastern religions. In contrast, God's people were to be saints- called-out ones- cleansed and made holy, separated unto the true and living God and His Son by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God. The true temple of God at Ephesus was to be found in the bodies of the believers where Jesus was enshrined as Lord. It was to these people- God's people- that Paul addressed his letter."

Another man writes these words:

*"These believing Gentiles were those who showed themselves **faithful** in transaction of business and execution of commands or discharge of their official duties. They were those who trusted God's promises and lived as "saintly" saints in a society characterized by perversion, pornography and pollution, spiritually speaking."*

Conclusion:

Salvation changes our lives.

Romans 8:5-6

⁵ *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.*

⁶ *For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*