

Saint Pauls Cathedral, Melbourne  
Bible Study, Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2020

THE EPISTLE OF EPHESIANS



**AN OVERVIEW OF EPHESIANS**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y71r-T98E2Q>

**METHOD OF STUDY**

**Observe** → What does it say?

**Interpret** → What does it mean?

**Apply** → How do I respond?

# AN INTRODUCTION TO EPHESIANS

**Author:** The apostle Paul (Eph. 1:1;3:1). Early sources in church history that attribute this letter to Paul include: Irenaeus (200 A.D.), Clement of Alexandria (200 A.D.), and Origen (250 A.D.). Polycarp (125 A.D.) attests to its canonicity in his own epistle to the Philippians (chapter 12).

**The Recipients:** There are reasons to believe that this epistle was not designed for just one congregation, but intended to be passed around to several churches in the area surrounding Ephesus. The earliest manuscripts do not contain the phrase "in Ephesus" (cf. Eph. 1:1).

The epistle itself is in the form of a general treatise rather than as a letter written to a specific church. For example, there are no specific exhortations or personal greetings. It is thought by some (Conybeare and Howson) that this letter is the epistle that was first sent to Laodicea (cf. Col. 4:16), and designed to be shared with other churches, including Ephesus. Because Ephesus was the leading city of the region, and the main centre of Paul's missionary activity in the area (cf. Acts 19:1, 8-10), it is understandable why later scribes might have assigned this epistle to the church at Ephesus. Without question it was intended for *"the saints...and faithful in Christ Jesus."* (Eph. 1:1)

**Paul's Ministry In The Region:** Paul first came to Ephesus for a short visit toward the end of his second missionary journey (Acts 18:18-19). Located on the South-West coast of Asia Minor (modern day Turkey), Ephesus was one of the great cities in that part of the world. A Roman capital, it was a wealthy commercial centre and home for the worship of the goddess Diana (cf. Acts 19:23-41). Though Paul briefly studied with the Jews at the local synagogue and was invited to stay longer, he made plans to visit them again after a quick trip to Jerusalem (Acts 18:20-21).

On his third missionary journey Paul made it back to Ephesus for an extended stay of three years (cf. Acts 19:1,10; 20:31). After his initial success in converting twelve disciples of John (Acts 19:1-7), Paul spent three months teaching in the local synagogue (Acts 19:8). Resistance to his doctrine forced him to leave the synagogue, but he was able to continue teaching in the school of Tyrannus for a period of two years. The end result is that the gospel spread from Ephesus throughout Asia Minor (Acts 19:9-10). A disturbance created by some of the local idol makers finally forced Paul to leave Ephesus (Acts 19:23-20:1).

Toward the end of his third journey, Paul stopped at nearby Miletus, and met with the elders of the church at Ephesus. Reminding them of his work with them, he charged them to fulfil their own responsibilities as overseers of the flock of God, and then bid them a tearful farewell (Acts 20:17-38).

**Time And Place Of Writing:** Ephesians is one of Paul's four "prison epistles" (Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20; cf. Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon). The general consensus is that these epistles were written during Paul's imprisonment at Rome (cf. Acts 28:16.30-31). If such is truly the case, then Paul wrote Ephesians around 61-63 A.D. from Rome. The indication is that the epistles to the Colossians, Philemon and the

Ephesians were carried to their destination by Tychicus and Onesimus (cf. Eph. 6:21-22; Col. 4:7-9; Philemon 10-12).

**Purpose Of The Epistle:** Unlike other epistles written to specific churches, this epistle does not deal with specific problems in a local congregation. Instead, Paul addressed great themes that pertain to the Christian's position in Christ, as a member of the body of Christ, the church.

As expressed in his prayer for his readers, it was his desire that they might know:

- What is the hope of God's calling (Eph. 1:18)
- What are the glorious riches of God's inheritance in the saints (Eph. 1:18)
- What is God's great power toward those who believe (Eph. 1:19)

In the first three chapters, Paul answers his own prayer by expounding upon their spiritual blessings in Christ. The last three chapters focus on the conduct (or "walk", cf. Eph 4:1,17; 5:2,8,15) expected of those so richly blessed.

Therefore, Paul writes to:

- Remind Christians of their spiritual blessings in Christ (Eph. 1:3)
- Exhort Christians to have a "walk worthy of the calling with which you were called" (Eph. 4:1)

**Theme Of The Epistle:** A grand epistle like Ephesians almost defies coming up with one main theme. The theme which does justice to the content of the epistle and offered by Warren Wiersbe is "The Believer's Riches In Christ"

**Key Verse: Ephesians 1:3**

*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,"<sup>i</sup>*

**SYMMETRY OF EPHESIANS**

<b>EPHESIANS 1-3</b>	<b>EPHESIANS 4-6</b>
Identity - Our Heritage In Christ	Responsibility - Our Life In Christ
The Finished Work of Christ	The Faithful Walk of the Christian
The Position of the Believer	The Practice of the Believer
Theology / Doctrine	Ethics / Practice
Privilege / Blessings	Conduct
Belief	Behaviour
Knowing our Spiritual Wealth	Living out our Spiritual Walk

# OUTLINE OF EPHESIANS<sup>ii</sup>

## INTRODUCTION (1:1-2)

### 1. DOCTRINE: OUR RICHES IN CHRIST (1:3-3:21)

#### 1.1 Our Spiritual Possessions In Christ (1:3-14)

- From the Father (1:4-6)
- From the Son (1:7-12)
- From the Spirit (1:13-14)
  - First Prayer: for enlightenment (1:15-23)

#### 1.2 Our Spiritual Position In Christ (2:1-22)

- Raised and seated on the throne (2:1-10)
- Reconciled and set into the temple (2:11-22)
  - Second Prayer: for enablement (3:1-21; with v.2-13 as a parenthesis)

### 2. PRACTICE: OUR RESPONSIBILITIES IN CHRIST (4:1-6:20)

#### 2.1 A Call To Walk In Unity (4:1-16)

- Preserving the unity of the Spirit with proper attitudes (4:1-7)
- Edifying the body of Christ by the grace given us (4:8-16)

#### 2.2 A Call To Walk In Purity (4:17-5:21)

- Walk not as other Gentiles (4:17-32)
- Walk in love (5:1-6)
- Walk as children of light (5:7-14)
- Walk as wise (5:15-21)

#### 2.3 A Call To Walk In Harmony (5:22-6:9)

- Husbands and wives (5:22-33)
- Parents and children (6:1-4)
- Masters and servants (6:5-9)

#### 2.4 A Call To Walk In Victory (6:10-20)

- Standing strong in the power of the Lord (6:10-13)
- Equipped with the whole armour of God (6:14-20)

## CONCLUSION (6:21-24)

## **This week's passage: Ephesians 1:1-2**

### **GREETINGS**

#### **NRSV**

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus:

<sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **ESV**

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus:

<sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **LB**

Dear Christian friends at Ephesus, ever loyal to the Lord: This is Paul writing to you, chosen by God to be Jesus Christ's messenger.

<sup>2</sup> May his blessings and peace be yours, sent to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

#### **KJ21**

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, To the saints who are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

<sup>2</sup> Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- How did Paul introduce himself? Why?
- What is Paul's relationship with Ephesus? (Acts 19; 20:17-38)
- Briefly describe the city of Ephesus.
- How did Paul address the Christians in Ephesus? Why?
- What are some truths we learn today that we can put into practice?

## TEACHING POINTS

1. Paul an apostle – Paul introduces himself as “Paul and apostle of Christ” in most of his epistles. The fact that Paul was an apostle is an amazing story. He was one of the most zealous persecutors of believers in the early church. But a divine encounter with Jesus transformed him. After his divine appointment with Jesus, he became a zealous missionary. Whenever Paul introduces himself in this way it is a reminder of Jesus’ life changing power.

Beyond this, it is a statement of Paul’s credentials. Paul’s credentials as an apostle are an important reminder to the recipients of his letter that he has the authority from God to relay His message and give commands for the church. It is a gentle way of saying, “you had better listen to what I have to say!”

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.blueletterbible.org/study/eo/Eph/Eph000.cfm>

<sup>ii</sup> adapted from The Bible Exposition Commentary, Vol. 2, Warren W. Wiersbe, p.7