

Paul's Letter to
The Ephesians



Lesson 1-Prayers and Thanksgivings for God's Goodness

Focus: Ephesians 1:1-23

1. Introduction to Ephesians:

- a. Ephesians is letter or book of the Bible that deals with **two major areas; the first half of Ephesians** (chapters 1-3) deals mostly with the blessings and privileges that we as believers have in Christ. **The second half of this letter** (or, epistle) (chapters 4-6) deals with the practical concerns of living out the Christian life from day to day.
- b. This letter was **written by the Apostle Paul** to the church "in Ephesus" (1:1) in **A.D. 60 or 61, during Paul's first Roman imprisonment**. Although some have challenged a little bit the idea about it being written directly to the church in Ephesus because a number of ancient manuscripts omit the words "en Epheso" (Grk.) or "in Ephesus" (1:1). Some think perhaps it was meant to have a broader, more circular purpose among different churches of the time because it has a more formal tone to it—not so directly personal as do two of Paul's 14 (13) letters (i.e. Romans and Colossians—these two are the only two letters in the N.T. with personal greetings from Paul; these were also addressed to churches Paul had not visited). Paul uses some distant language with phrases like "after I heard of your faith" (1:15) and "if they "have heard" of his message" (3:2). However, regardless of these thoughts and theories, the clear fact remains; **this letter became very clearly associated with the Ephesian church**, and many manuscripts do clearly place the phrase "in Ephesus" in their introduction.
- c. **Ephesus is a city located in Asia Minor just across the sea from the Greek Peninsula. Paul spent nearly 3 years living in Ephesus** (He also wrote his first letter to the Corinthian church from that city). At the end of Paul's second missionary journey he visited this city (Acts 18:18-21). On his third missionary journey Paul remained in Ephesus for three years (Acts 18:23-19:41). **The ancient city of Ephesus was very famous for its large temple of Diana** (Roman name) or **Artemis** (Greek name) (See **Acts 19:34,35**). This temple was one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world. **The Ephesians also had a huge theater in their city**. At this place the Ephesians once got into an uproar of excitement against Paul because his preaching had so effectively destroyed many of the merchant's sales of idols (Acts 19:23-35).
- d. **The letter to the Ephesians is considered one of Paul's four "prison epistles."** Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon were all written **from Rome** during Paul's first Roman imprisonment (A.D. 60-62). These letters all make reference to Paul's imprisonment and fit well the background of Acts 28:16-31.

2. Paul opens his letter with his typical, but powerful fashion of greeting and introduction (v.1,2)

Generally, we see that all of his epistles begin with his signature, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ..." These words hold great power and are significant for us. We must remember the origin of these words that we are studying. "Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, **by the will of God...**" is writing to the saints or the believers in Christ...to "the faithful in Jesus Christ" who live at Ephesus. **God himself had called Paul** (the previous persecutor of the church) **to be His apostle to the Gentiles**. By a powerful display of God's hand, Paul was called to this work. God had chosen him specifically and planned to work powerfully through him. **The words of this letter come to us with great weight of importance because these are words which God himself inspired** (and gave us through his chosen vessel—though but a man)."Grace and peace..." were offered to the readers, and it is our hope and joy to receive this "grace and peace" from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ as we read and study these words today, and in our lessons to come!

3. Praise is offered to our All-powerful God for His blessings and mercy towards us (v.3-6)

- a. *“Spiritual Blessings” and all true blessings come from God. “In Christ” we may have these heavenly spiritual blessings (v.3).*
 - b. *(v.4, 5) God chooses only good things for us. This is His perfect and righteous desire for every soul (Jeremiah 29:11; Luke 2:14; 2 Peter 3:9). Since the “foundation of the world” God has desired and planned these good things for us—He has desired for us to be **pure and holy**, “made in His own image” as it was at the beginning (Genesis 1:27). He has chosen us for this purpose, “to be without blame before Him in love” (v.4). And He planned always since the terrible fall of mankind into sin, that we would be redeemed or saved through the blood offering of His Son Jesus Christ (Revelation 13:8—Jesus was “slain from the foundation of the world”). As soon as there was sin, God had a plan to save mankind from this terrible moral disease they had brought upon themselves by their wrong choice and action. God “predestines” us for these good things. He tries to send us and all on that good path that will collide eventually with the saving power of His Son Jesus Christ (See Acts 17:26-28). God desires and aims that all should be saved (though it’s a fact the most have been lost by their own choices of life in sin). God never chooses some to be lost and others to be saved (as some false teachers have said). No, he desires for all to be saved and He aims for that. Nevertheless, we must all make our choices for Him and His way, or in our own rebellious ways.*
- 4. God displays His great will and love for mankind—to redeem us through His Son Jesus (v.7-12)**
- a. *God seeks to save us through His Son’s life-offering—his blood (v.7; Romans 6:23; 3:23). He makes His perfect will known to us “according to His good pleasure” (v.8). “according to the riches of His grace” (v.7). God has “riches of grace” that He want to share with us. His grace is greater than all our sin. He desires to forgive and cleanse us from sin, even more than we’ve desired to repent and turn from it (Ezekiel 33:11; 1 John 1:9). Let us not ever allow sin to be a barrier between us and Jesus, but let us “come unto” him the receive his cleansing (Matthew 11:28; Hebrews 4:14-16). Christ re-unites fallen man with their Heavenly Father and all of Heaven’s holy society (v.10).*
- 5. Saved, and sealed by His Spirit, Christ longs to gather His truly faithful children (v.13,14)**
- a. *The word of truth and God’s Spirit bring salvation to our souls. He will save those who believe and truth in Him—we will receive the earnest of His Spirit—the true promise and assurance of eternal life. God regenerates our hearts through His Holy Spirit unto life eternal. He changes us from sin, filth, and unholiness, back to holiness. We have been **purchased by Christ**—we are a “purchased possession,” but He is yet to come and collect His purchased possession. Soon, soon, and very soon, He is coming to take us home to be with Him—He can hardly waited to gather and fully redeem all of His sons and daughters! Like a child waits for His Christmas present, so Christ waits for His own. Like a parent longing for their long-absent child to return unto them, so Christ waits for His people!*
- 6. Thanksgiving and Prayers are offered for true spiritual knowledge (v.15-23)**
- a. *(v.15-17) With praise and thanksgiving the Apostle prayed for theses believers to have “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.” More of this true knowledge of Him is what we desperately need and desire to have. We must understand the “exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe” (v.18,19). That life-transforming power of God! Christ is the head the body—His church! And just as Christ was raised up from the dead and “set in heavenly places” so God desires to raise us up from the deadness and destruction of sin, to put us into those “heavenly places” (v.20-23).*

Question (s) for the Heart:

Would you like to understand the true knowledge of God and to experience those “heavenly places” through Christ Jesus? _____ (Christ will set us up far above the wretched mire of sin in this world. He will cleanse us by His grace; forgive us of our sins, and help us to walk in the way of holiness).