

Ephesians Introduction

Bible Study

As we start the book, we pray for discernment and wisdom. James 1:5 says **If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.** It's appropriate to ask for help in understanding what we're reading. But it's WISDOM not just about head-knowledge. Wisdom is APPLIED knowledge, it's all about applying what we have learned to our lives. James 1:22 says **Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.** So we pray that God will help us apply the Word to our lives. We ask God to open our spiritual eyes so that we can see the Truth of God's word, see the wonder, the perfection, the Glory of God revealed in His Word. Without His help, we are simply "natural" persons with natural eyes. **"The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand [see] them because they are spiritually discerned"** (1 Corinthians 2:14). **"Seeing they do not"** was Jesus's phrase for those who saw him and his teaching only with natural eyes, without the illumining work of the Spirit (Matthew 13:13).

Who's who

a. Personalities, what are they like, what are their personalities like.

i. Authors-The Holy Spirit and Paul

Paul the apostle is the author of the letter. Paul, the former persecutor, the man whose life was radically altered on the road to Damascus. Paul was a founder and minister to the church at Ephesus.

God the Father--Chooses us in Christ, Lavishes grace on us, Puts all things under Christ, Makes Christ the head of the church, Seats us with Christ in heaven, Saves us by grace through Christ, builds us into his temple, and reveals the mystery of the gospel.

Jesus-God's purpose is centered in Christ, in whom God acts and who died on the cross to bring unity and peace to broken humanity.

(Holy Spirit)--

The Holy Spirit is behind the scenes, testifying about Jesus, but being silent about Himself.

ii. The Ephesian Churches

1. The Saints Who Are at Ephesus--This book is written to the Ephesian church,

iii. Mostly Greek, Gentile, saved saints.

Perplexities—what are they struggling with?

The two great enemies that Paul encounters in Ephesus are the demonic devotion of the people to the practice of magic, which is trying to gain spiritual power apart from the Holy Spirit, and instead looking to fallen, evil spirits. The worship of Artemis, the false Goddess was also something that Paul had to contend with. But the second great enemy that came against Paul was men's love of money and protecting their commerce—being willing to live a lie instead of giving up their financial profits. This is the backdrop of what the Ephesian church is struggling with. These things were threatening to corrupt their doctrine, and their relationship with Christ, turning the powerful, wonderful, personal relationship that they enjoyed in Christ, to just a religion, or even a first religion among several.

The Ephesians have all the spiritual blessings they could ever need and want, yet they're seriously malnourished because they aren't fully embracing the riches of God's glorious grace through the Lord Jesus. They are stagnant and not fully growing in their new-found faith.

Understanding and applying the truths of the first three chapters make possible the actions and lifestyle of walking out the Way described in the rest of the epistle. Problems—what are their stated problems?

In addition to the spiritual warfare, and love of money that was coming against the church, there were the temptations of giving in to persecution, and giving in to the temptations of the Big City. It was a constant struggle.

Paul recognized the positive things going on at Ephesus; their "toil and [...] patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil," as the writer of Revelation put it (Revelation 2:2); yet later,

they abandoned “the love you had at first” (Revelation 2:4). His letter was probably an important reminder to a church that was losing its first zeal for Christ. Paul’s letter reminded the Ephesians to remain in Christ and unified as a body. This unity would protect them spiritually while providing testimony to a watching world.

2. Where? Places

a. Location of audience written to: Ephesians

EPHESUS (Ἔφεσος, Ephesos). Was on the West coast of Asia Minor, in the Southwestern corner of Turkey, near the present-day city of Kushidasi. The city was originally founded ca. 1000 BC by the Greeks. It came under Roman control in 133 BC. Made the capital of the Roman province of Asia Minor by Augustus (27 BC—AD 14). Ephesus was the third largest city in the Roman empire. Its population is estimated to have been around 250,000. The Artemis shrine in Ephesus provided the area with a lucrative tourist business from pilgrims traveling to the temple. In addition, the temple served as a financial institution and lent out money from the wealth deposited at the shrine—so it was like their bank.

b. Location of author when writing: Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians sometime in AD 60–61, around the same time he wrote Colossians and Philemon. It was during this time that Paul sat in Rome undergoing his first Roman imprisonment (Ephesians 3:1; 4:1), making Ephesians one of the four epistles commonly known as the Prison Epistles. The others are Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

c. Theme—Paul encourages the Ephesians to Christlike maturity. He prays that they would mature and develop into true children of God, fortifying and establishing them so that they can fulfill the purpose and calling God has given. The aim of this epistle is to confirm and to equip a maturing church. It lets us know what it means to be the Body of Christ.

d. Genre—

i. Pastoral letter

3. How? Structure—how is Philippians organized? 6 chapters.

Main ideas/themes

Ephesians is a book of great and sublime revelations of our purpose as Christians

. Ephesians is about Jesus, and our New Life in Christ as individuals, and as the Church.

Reconciliation in Christ—A central message of Ephesians concerns the reconciliation of the church, and even the cosmos in Christ.

The Sovereignty of Christ over Spiritual Powers. Ephesians proclaims Christ’s supremacy over spiritual forces (1:21) and His empowering presence in the life of believers (3:16, 20).

Transformation in Christ—Throughout the letter, Paul affirms that followers of Jesus experience transformation and receive new identities. We have been adopted into the family of God (1:5) and have obtained an inheritance (1:11). We’ve been chosen to be holy, set apart for God and his work (1:4)

We’ve been predestined to exist for God’s praise and glory (1:11–14)

We’ve been saved, created anew, and given good works to do (2:8–10)

We make known God’s wisdom to the spiritual powers within the heavenly realms (3:10)

We live God’s story in practical ways at every juncture in life (5:21–6:9)

And we are part of the Church Body--the “together” aspect of our life in God’s story and in Christ “is seen in striking stylistic and linguistic features of Ephesians. ... In the letter Paul uses ten different words that begin with some version of the Greek word *sun*, which means ‘with’” (14). Here is a sample: God made us alive together with Christ (2:5) God seated us together with Christ (2:6) We are heirs together with Israel (3:6) We are sharers together with each other in the promise (3:6) We are held together with each other in Christ’s body (4:16)