

EPHESIANS

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Blessed Church, Blessed Life

Within the Jewish community letter writing was rare. Writing was expensive and was generally restricted to officials and the wealthy. When Paul wrote a letter there was a reason for it. Paul's letters were some of the longest in the ancient world. Letters were mostly written on rolls, which explains why the writers name appeared first. Letter writers often had help (e.g. Silas helped Paul) and letters often felt conversational in style because they were dictated. Interestingly Paul probably had poor eyesight.

Notice what large letters I use as I write these closing words in my own handwriting. (Galatians 6:11, NLT)

Paul's letters were both personal and practical. His letter to the Church in Ephesus was actually the only one written in general circular style. It was written whilst Paul was in prison around 60AD.

Ephesus was a big port, a centre of commerce and had an enormous pagan temple (one of the seven wonders of the ancient world) which generated a large income.

Paul made at least two visits to Ephesus (Acts 18-20) staying for about three years. Lots of people were saved but there was also a lot of opposition (from worshippers of Artemis). Paul wrote his two letters to Timothy who was in Ephesus. The Apostle John lived in Ephesus and there is a letter in Revelation to the church in Ephesus.

Rather than dealing with specific issues in the church, Paul wrote this letter to counter:

- Syncretism – assimilation of gods under some form of Olympian pantheon
- Gnosticism – dualistic, secret knowledge, creation is evil – spirit is good

Both of which were prevalent in Greek culture.

In the letter he sets out a summary of Christian belief and behaviour.

Chapters 1-3, our relationship with God (purpose and power)

Chapters 4-6, our relationship with others (walk and welfare)

Chapter 1:1-14. Paul paints the big picture

A - Planned by the Father

He _____ us (1-3)

“This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. I am writing to God’s holy people in Ephesus, who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace. All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ.”

He _____ us (4)

“Even before He made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes.”

- When?
- Why?

He _____ us (5-6)

“God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. So, we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son.”

B - Purchased by the Son

What Jesus did (7-10)

“He is so rich in kindness and grace that He purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. He has showered His kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding. God has now revealed to us His mysterious will regarding Christ which is to fulfil His own good plan. And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth.

- Redeemed by His _____
- _____ in His name

Why Jesus did it (11-12)

“Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for He chose us in advance, and He makes everything work out according to His plan. God’s purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God.

C - Preserved by the Spirit

What the Holy Spirit does (13) – His presence serves as a seal on our heart.

“And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago.”

Why the Holy Spirit does it (14) – His presence guarantees our eternal security.

“The Spirit is God’s guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.”

Chapter 1:15-23. Paul’s prayer for that which we should understand

A - Concerning His _____ (15-17)

“Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God’s people everywhere, I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God.”

B - Concerning His _____ (18)

“I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called His holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.”

C - Concerning His _____ (19-20)

“I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God’s power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead”

D - Concerning His _____ (20-23)

“And seated him in the place of honour at God’s right hand in the heavenly realms. Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself.”

- Christ in heaven – exalted
- Christ on earth – head of the church