



Overview

Who wrote the book?

For a brief time at the end of his second missionary journey, and then for more than two years on his third missionary journey, Paul ministered to the church at Ephesus (Acts 18:18-21; 19:1-41). During his time in this city that housed the famous temple to the Greek goddess Artemis, Paul saw many converted to faith in Jesus Christ and many others who opposed his preaching in the synagogues and homes.

One prominent silversmith, Demetrius, who made implements for the worship of Artemis, found his business suffering greatly because people were converting to Christianity. The ensuing near-riot led Paul to leave the city, but only after the apostle had done much to stabilize and grow the Christian community there.

Where are we?

Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians sometime in AD 60–61, around the same time he wrote Colossians and Philemon, as he sent all three letters by the hand of Tychicus, accompanied by Onesimus (Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7-9; Philemon 1:10-12). 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.

Why is Ephesians so important?

Second Corinthians and Galatians abound with personal touches from Paul, either about his own life or that of the recipients. Ephesians, on the other hand, stands at the opposite end of the spectrum as one of Paul's most formal letters. While Galatians offers instructions particularly important for those churches overrun with legalism, Ephesians deals with topics at the very core of what it means to be a Christian—both in faith and in practice—regardless of any particular problem in the community.

What's the big idea?

Paul divided his letter to the Ephesians into two clear segments; applying the truths of the first makes possible the actions and lifestyle of the second. Paul spent the first three chapters of the letter discussing God's creation of a holy community by His gift of grace in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The members of this community have been chosen by God through the work of Christ, adopted as sons and daughters of God, and brought near to the Father through faith in His Son. All people with this faith—Jews and Gentiles alike—were dead in their transgressions and sins but have been made alive because of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

While Paul was not responding to a particular theological or moral problem, he wanted to protect against future problems by encouraging the Ephesians to mature in their faith. So after laying out profound theological truths in the first half of the book, Paul made his purpose clear: he expected that this community of faith would walk in accordance with its heavenly calling (Ephesians 4:1). As a result of the theological realities Christians accept by their faith in God, several practices should follow in their relationships within the church, in the home, and in the world.

Lesson Points

1. The source of our wealth is the God of all riches
2. Faith positions us to receive from God
3. The blessings of God are already established
 - a. Know and believe God has what we need.
 - b. Take possession of what has been decreed, bequeathed, or given to us.
4. We have been given all spiritual blessings
5. We have been given eternal blessings

Discussion Questions

Start It Out

Share some of the blessings you have received from God in the last 30 days—anything big or small.

Talk It Out

1. Why do you think Paul introduces himself as “an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God”? Who are “God’s holy people in Ephesus”? How have we been blessed in the heavenly realms?
2. What are the spiritual blessings in Christ in verse 3? What kinds of blessings have you received? Where did those blessings come from? What blessings have you experienced that you feel were directly from God?
3. We know that we mess up, so how is it possible for us to be holy and blameless in God’s sight? What does “predestined” mean? In what two ways can we understand verses 5 and 11? Does God choose the people who will believe in him? Or does he simply know who will choose to believe in him?

Live It Out

Keep a blessing notebook, jotting down the blessings you receive each day. Praise God for the ways he is blessing you.