

Ephesians

Like many of the New Testament letters the city of Ephesus is addressed to a place where a church had been planted which is today in modern day Turkey.

Acts 19 contains three stories of events at Ephesus. Acts 19:1-10 details a story of Paul correcting an error of baptism within which the Gentile believers had been baptized for repentance, but not to receive the Holy Spirit.

The rectifying of this error leads to an explosion of the Jesus-life as miracles take place and spiritual entities are realigned. This is in Acts 19:12-22.

Then in Acts 19:23-41 a riot breaks out over Christ supplanting the goddess of the area, the Greek goddess Artemis, Diana in Rome, of the Ephesians.

Ephesus was a major city in Asia Minor. It had a centrally located harbor, now silted up, on the Cayster River, which emptied onto the Aegean Sea three-miles away. Add to that the huge temple to the aforementioned Artemis, which was one of the so-called seven wonders of the world, as well as one of the largest theaters in the Roman world which could seat some 25,000 people.

The Apostle John spent time in Ephesus and Mary, the mother of Jesus made her home near there in her final years. Later, Paul's "son in the faith" Timothy became the pastor.

Most commentators break Ephesians up into two connected halves: the first a theological, doctrinal, and ethical treatise, containing liturgy and poetic language that has made people doubt its Pauline authorship; the second, an appeal to live out the ramifications of the first half which connects it to its Pauline authorship.

If indeed Paul did write this letter most scholarship places it around 60AD which would put it when he was in Rome in prison and about four to five years from his death.

Along the way we find those two halves of who Jesus is (theology) and what are ya gona do about it? (how then shall we live?) as a deeply honest look at what we are about in this Lenten season . . . taking our hearts back from all the temporal things to which we have given them and giving them fully to God.

For a nice little overview of the city by PBS Travel guy Rick Steves click on this link. <https://youtu.be/mvPCtrZ1K00>

And for a nice overview of the whole book by the Bible Project click here <https://youtu.be/Y71r-T98E2Q>

Chapter one text

Salutation

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,
To the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful^[a] in Christ Jesus:

² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Blessings in Christ

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ just as he chose us in Christ^[b] before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵ He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸ that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹ he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance,^[c] having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹² so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴ this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

Paul's Prayer

¹⁵ I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love^[d] toward all the saints, and for this reason ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, ¹⁸ so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. ²⁰ God^[e] put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. ²² And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

**Adoption in the first century ~ by William Barclay
from his commentary on Romans pg. 106**

Roman adoption was always rendered more serious and more difficult by the Roman *patria potestas*. This was the father's power over his family; it was the power of absolute disposal and control, and in the early days it was actually the power of life and death. In regard to his father, a Roman son never came of age. No matter how old he was, he was still under the *patria potestas*, in the absolute possession and under the absolute control, of his father. Obviously this made adoption into another family a very difficult and serious step. In adoption a person had to pass from one *patria potestas* to another.

There were two steps. The first was known as *mancipatio*, and was carried out by a symbolic sale, in which copper and scales were symbolically used. Three times the symbolism of sale was carried out. Twice the father symbolically sold his son, and twice he brought him back; but the third time he did not buy him back and thus the *patria potestas* was held to be broken. There followed a ceremony called *vindicatio*. The adopting father went to the *praetor*, one of the Roman magistrates, and presented a legal case for the transference of the person to be adopted into his *patria potestas*. When all this was completed, the adoption was complete. Clearly this is a serious and impressive step.

But it is the consequence of adoption which are most significant for the picture that is in Paul's mind. There were four main ones:

1. The adopted person lost all rights in his old family and gained all the rights of a legitimate son in his new family. In the most binding legal way, he got a new father.
2. It followed that he became heir to his new father's estate. Even if other sons were afterwards born, it did not affect his rights. He was inalienably co-heir with them.
3. In law, the old life of the adopted person was completely wiped out; for instance, all debts were canceled. He was regarded as a new person entering into a new life with which the past had nothing to do.
4. In the eyes of the law he was absolutely the son of his new father.

This is the image behind Paul's thinking. Once we were in the absolute control of our sinful nature; but God in his mercy, has brought us into his absolute possession. The old life has no more rights over us; God has an absolute right. The past is cancelled, and its debts are wiped out; we begin a new life with God and become heirs of all his riches; joint heirs with Christ, God's own Son. That which he inherits we inherit.