

Studies in Ephesians – An Outline

1. Salutation and greeting: 1:1-2
2. God's Purpose for the Church: 1:3-3:13
 - a. Predestined in Christ: 1:3-6a
 - b. Redemption in Christ: 1:6b-10
 - c. Inheritance in Christ: 1:11-14
 - d. Resources in Christ: 1:15-23
 - e. New life in Christ: 2:1-10
 - f. Unity in Christ: 2:11-3:13
3. God's Fullness for the Church: 3:14-21
4. God's Plan for Faithful Living in the Church: 4:1-6
5. God's Son Endows and Builds the Church 4:7-16
6. God's Pattern and Principles for Members of the Church: 4:17-32
7. God's Standards for Faithfulness in the Church: 5:1-21
 - a. Walking in Love: 5:1-7
 - b. Living in Light: 5:8-14
 - c. Walking in Wisdom and Sobriety: 5:15-18a
 - d. Filled with God's Spirit: 5:18b-21
8. God's Standards for Authority and Submission in the church: 5:22-6:9
 - a. Husbands and Wives: 5:22-33
 - b. Parents and Children: 6:1-4
 - c. Masters and Slaves: 6:5-9
9. God's Provision for Spiritual Battles: 6:10-17
 - a. The Believer's Warfare: 6:10-13
 - b. The Believer's Armour 6:14-17
10. God's Appeal for Prayer in the Church: 6:18-20
11. Benediction: 6:21-24

Trinity Church Studies in Ephesians

Introduction to the Series

Sinclair B Ferguson captures the setting of this letter to the church at Ephesus powerfully: *"If Romans is, humanly speaking, the most impressive of Paul's letters, then Ephesians is probably the most elegant. In its opening doxology blessings cascade down upon the reader. In its closing verses the smell of the battlefield lies heavily in the air and through the smoke of war we see Christians, fully clad in the armour of spiritual warfare, still standing. From beginning to end Ephesians sets before us the wonder of God's grace, the privilege of belonging to the church, and the pattern of life-transformation the gospel produces."* Others have variously referred to this letter as: *"The distilled essence of the Christian religion"* – *"The most authoritative and most consummate compendium of the Christian faith"* – *"Full to the brim with thoughts and doctrines sublime and momentous."* In short then a letter most worthy of our study!

Introduction to the Epistle to the Ephesians

a. The Author and Date:

The Apostle Paul around AD 62. The opening words of the letter in ch1:1 attributes the authorship to the apostle Paul and he affirms his identity midway through the letter in ch3:1. The date is taken from Paul's imprisonment in Rome [Acts 28:30] during which time it is believed he wrote: Ephesians; Philippians; Colossians and Philemon.

b. The Ephesians:

Ephesus was the major city of the Roman province known as Asia, in what we now know as Turkey. An ancient city which had a chequered history, it had become part of the Roman Empire two centuries before Paul visited in around AD 52. By the world of its day's standards it was large and heavily populated [believed to have been around 300,000]. Its theatre was the size of a modern football stadium and may have held as many as 50,000 people.

As a city in the Roman Empire, the cult of *Emperor Worship* would have been encouraged but the religion for which Ephesus was famed was the cult of *Diana* [or to use the Greek term: *Artemis*]. Here stood the temple of Diana and so magnificent was its scale and architecture, it was ranked as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. It would have dwarfed the Parthenon at Athens. Within the temple was preserved an image of the goddess herself which it was believed had fallen from heaven [See Acts 19:35].

c. Paul and Ephesus:

We know that Paul made his **first** [shorter visit] to Ephesus towards the end of his 2nd Missionary Journey when he was accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla. Although Paul appears to have done some initial evangelistic work amongst the Jews and they requested he stay longer but he declined promising to return [Acts 18:18-21]. It would appear the task for establishing the church was left with Aquila and Priscilla and we see them providing teaching and guiding for the gifted but inexperienced Apollos [Acts 18:24ff].

Paul's return visit was made during his 3rd Missionary Journey which probably began in the Spring of AD 54. This lasted 3 years [Acts 20:31] the key details of this period are recorded in Acts ch19, including a major riot.

Paul would write two further letters to the church in Ephesus but these would be of a more personal nature and addressed to the then pastor, Timothy [Letters 1 & 2 Timothy] - Revelation 2:1-7 gives us a further bit of background and some indications of the problems at Ephesus in John's record of the Message to the 7 Churches.

d. Ephesians the Letter:

There are several unusual features about the letter that might explain the widely held view that it was written to more than one congregation in the Ephesus area. Whilst 6:21-22 certainly shows a dual purpose to update on his personal situation and encourage the church; the lack of any personal

greeting; in addition the fact that Paul seems to think there will be amongst the recipients, those who do not know him personally [ch3:2] and the lack of the words: 'in Ephesus' from the earliest manuscripts, seem to suggest a wider audience. What is certainly true is the circular nature of the letter today and once we have sought to hear what the Spirit was saying to the Ephesians, we need to consider what is being said to us today!

e. Ephesians the Message:

The Ephesians Christians found themselves marginalised in a pluralistic society that was tolerant of many things but not the Christian gospel or the church which was proclaiming it. They would have lacked security and Paul teaches them that they are part of the eternal purposes of God – They lived under the threat of dark and sinister powers and they needed to know Christ had overcome all enemies – They were surrounded by the influences of the world, the flesh and the devil so Paul reminds them they have been 'made alive in Christ' – They were surrounded by a false temple and many gods so Paul reminds them they are the true temple of God, the body of Christ. They witnessed corruption and self-interest all around them so Paul shows them how not only their lives but their relationships are transformed and lifted out of the world.

As one commentator observes, this letter is contained in only four pages but it could take us the rest of our lives to apply the great truths contained in it!

Commentaries

1. ***Let's Study Ephesians***: Sinclair Ferguson by Banner of Truth – A good basic commentary, with questions and a study guide
2. ***Ephesians***: Brian Chapell – Reformed Expository Commentary by Presbyterian and Reformed – Expository without being too technical
3. ***Galatians and Ephesians*** – William Hendriksen- New Testament Commentary by Banner of Truth – Detailed commentary dealing with all issues arising in broad and clear detail