



Ephesians

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Chapter 1

Paul has spent 2 years teaching the Ephesians having planted the Church which is recorded in Acts 19. However, he feels constrained by the Spirit of God to write a letter to share with them essential truths regarding the gospel and the church.

He urges strongly that we have been given every spiritual blessing in Christ. The emphasis is on the spiritual although the gospel clearly acknowledges our physical and material needs. The Spiritual blessings include that we have been chosen before the creation of the world.

The act of being chosen is something for the believer to understand and is not relevant to the unbeliever. God's choice of us is sovereign and a mystery which we are to enjoy and appreciate. We can never fully understand it and it is unhelpful to think about who may not be chosen. This understanding is for the believer; we humble ourselves and submit to God's plan for we have been chosen for a purpose.

Predestined

God knows everything, He knows the end from the beginning and He does have a plan for our lives. He has given us a will which can be submitted to Him or can rebel against Him, He sees and knows everything and has prepared good works for us to walk in.

Adoption

By nature we are separate from God and children of darkness. God has wonderfully chosen to bring us into His family. We have been born again and His life has been placed within us and we have become His sons and daughters. His attitude to us is so wonderful, in the world you may have noticed a distinction between children born out of a marriage and those born who have been added to the family outside of the marriage. However,

the heart of God is so incredible that He loves us even as He loves His Son the Lord Jesus and we are as precious to Him as Christ is.

Redemption

As we were born in sin and separate from God we were born into the kingdom of darkness, we were slaves to sin and the devil. The only price that could free us from this slavery was that Jesus should shed His blood. This remarkable sacrifice was made willingly by Jesus so that we could be rescued and delivered from Satan's power and placed into God's Kingdom.

Holy Spirit

When we believed we were given the gift of the Holy Spirit. He is a deposit who guarantees our inheritance to be with Jesus forever.

Prayer

Paul ministered to people through his life and through his teaching. He also ministered powerfully into people's lives through his prayers for them. He prays for wisdom and revelation of God. He prays that believers might know Jesus better; he prays that God's people would appreciate the riches they have in Christ. He prays believing that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in us. He prays that we might appreciate that we are the body of Christ, that we belong to Jesus and that we might acknowledge that Jesus is God and the head of the church.

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Chapter 2

Paul now turns to the important theme of understanding who we were before we came to Christ and who we now are having come to Christ. We were dead in our sins, we were under the control of Satan, we were disobedient, we were satisfying our own desires and we were deserving of God's wrath. But the grace of God and the love of God has brought about a radical change. Now we are alive in Christ. Now we are saved and rescued from the Kingdom of darkness. We are seated with Christ in the heavenly places and we have an entirely different view of life and eternity. We are God's personal masterpiece and we are able to do the works that God has planned which are productive for His glory and our personal fulfilment.

Paul now wants to talk about the Jew and the Gentile. Paul is very aware of the value of the Jews but also is committed to the call of God to take the Gospel to the Gentiles. God has given him the understanding that Christ reconciles Jews and Gentiles. It is no longer necessary for them to be separated and to be hostile to one another because the work of the cross means that the Jew with all their great tradition and spiritual roots can be fully joined to the Pagan Gentile because of Christ.

Those far away from one another have been made one because Jesus has died to bring us to God. The purpose of God working through the Jews was to bring His Son into the world. Now that Jesus has come, lived a perfect life and sacrificed Himself on the cross, there can be peace and there can be fellowship between all people groups who trust in Christ and Christ alone for salvation. What God has done is a remarkable thing. His household, His Church is made up of many different people. We are not foreigners and strangers to one another but we have become friends and one body in Christ. Christ is the chief cornerstone, everything rests on Him and everything comes from Him. He has made Himself known through His Apostles and through the Prophets and it is their proclamation of Christ that we depend upon, for their ministry points us to Christ.

Paul says that we are being built together to become a dwelling place for God Himself. The Church is the body of people who have acknowledged the Lordship of Jesus Christ and this is the evidence that what is happening is truly of God; it is the discernible, powerful presence of God. This is the will of God that people should find Him now not in a building made with human hands but that He should be known and seen as He dwells among His people.

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Chapter 3

Paul is proclaiming that the work of God made known in His Church is like a mystery that is being revealed. For the world there may be no recognition or understanding of what God is doing among His people. This incredible work of bringing people to Christ whether they are Gentiles or Jews, it is only the Gospel that can achieve such a powerful bonding. Gods overall plan was to bless people from every nation; this is the direction that everything was heading even going as far back as Abraham. Sometimes in the world people think that they are in line for special benefits from a legacy promised to them, the Jews thought that the inheritance from God was going to come to them alone. But God always planned to share the wonderful benefits of salvation with all who believe in His Son the Lord Jesus.

Paul says I became a servant of this gospel. Of course he once thought that all of God's plans were confined to the Jew. This was what behind his intense persecution of those who professed to be Christians. We know that God met him on the Damascus Road and totally changed his thinking. Paul believed in the power of the gospel. He was happy to serve the gospel because he totally believed in it. He was now deeply aware that God was able to bring reconciliation and hope through Jesus. The church of God consists of that body of people who have found Christ to be Lord, Saviour and God. The church is able to reveal the power of God to those on earth and to all in the heavenly realms. The voice of the church is a powerful voice but we must be referring to God's church not to manmade replicas which are devoid of power and truth.

Pauls Prayer

Paul prays to the Father, he is obviously understood from Jesus that effective pray comes from a close relationship with Father God. Our Heavenly Father has a massive family from all nations of the world, all people groups, all tribes and cultures. No one is excluded if they will come through Christ to Him. He prays for the power of the Spirit to strengthen all believers. He prays much about the love of God that this wonderful love that God has, that we would

be rooted and established in it, that we would keep discovering the extent of it, that we might enjoy the fullness of God and His love in our lives. He knows that God is able to do more than we ask or imagine and he longs for the church of the Lord Jesus Christ to be seen clearly in the world as completely different. How powerful it is when the church does that and how sad it is when the church is full of division, sin and led by those who desire personal gain instead of the glory of God.

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Chapter 4

Paul now expands on the matter of a church where believers are brought to maturity and unity. He also wants a church which is able to overcome heresy and deceit. He urges believers to live worthy of their calling and to demonstrate humility, gentle patience and love. He shares that unity already exists to those who are true believers already in Christ, therefore unity is not something that we create but more something that we maintain. If the Holy Spirit is truly at work then there is one body, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. Christ having died and risen from the dead ascended to the right hand of the Father. From that exalted place He releases gifts of people who have different ministries which build up the body of Christ. So apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are different gifts with different callings but are to operate for the one purpose of bringing the church to unity and maturity in Christ.

These people gifts are to serve the body of Christ. If one has one of these gifts they do not suggest favouritism or that someone is superior, they simply enable effective service in the body of Christ. Apostles are builders and church planters and pastors of pastors. Prophets wait on God and bring a relevant word into the current situation. Evangelists preach the gospel but also equip the saints to be effective witnesses. Pastors and teachers care, protect and feed the body of Christ so that people are strong and equipped to function effectively in the body of Christ.

These ministries will in fact submit to one another so that the body of Christ is served well. Paul urges that we must be very practical in the way we live as Christians. We must put off our old selves and the former way of life and put on the new self so that we are like Christ who is righteous and holy. Falsehood and lies should not be part of the church. Grudges and resentments need to be dealt with and should not be allowed to fester. Every effort must be made to keep the devil outside the church. Stealing must stop and a desire to work hard to provide for one's self and one's family but also to share with the wider body. Our language must not be destructive but rather it should strengthen and build up others. We must not grieve the Holy Spirit; we must be sensitive to say, to think and to do what pleases God. Bitterness, angry, malice simply must not be allowed but rather kindness and

compassion and a willingness to forgive should be our lifestyle. Christ has forgiven us therefore we must be like Jesus and forgive others.

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Chapter 5

To walk in love even as Christ has loved us is the model that Jesus has set for us. His sacrifice for us produces a sweet offering. Although He suffered so much, His incredible self-control and His willingness to forgive those who hurt Him is inspirational to us, Paul now is extremely clear regarding sexual immorality and impurity. He tells the church that they need to be ruthless not allowing even the seed of thoughts to have any room to develop and grow. Some people has an attitude that they can go very near to a boundary and that that is ok because they have not crossed it. Paul is saying don't even go near the boundary line; keep well away from all that is sin. He makes it clear that sin and darkness go together and that the enemy of God, Satan lives in darkness and so we draw near to him when we move away from the Lord who is the light of the world. We are called to be cautious, sensitive and to use our time wisely, we are to be filled with the spirit on an ongoing basis. The word here is an exhortation to continuous fillings of the Holy Spirit. A Spirit filled church has everyone ministering to one another. Inspirational worship does not come just from the worship leader but from all member of the body of Christ.

Paul now comes to an extremely powerful picture of Christ and His church. It is the picture of marriage. It encourages wives to submit to their husbands. This is not slavery but recognition that in marriage the husband is the head. However, husbands are commanded to love their wives even as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. The commitment Christ has for His church is extraordinary. His desire that His church is pure, clean and holy, that the church is radiant is a very powerful language and Paul says husbands should loves their wives in the same way. It is well worth thinking about that marriage has the potential to be the most powerful relationship to make people like Christ. If married couples work together in the way that Paul describes then the power of Christ will be seen in a way that is exceptional.

Paul reminds us of the creation principle mentioned in the book of Genesis that when two people get married something totally new and very special is happening. There is a separation from previous relationships and there is a new creation that is profound, this is Christ and His church. We are separated from everything else to be bound to Him knowing that there is no question what so ever about His incredible commitment to us.

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Chapter 6

Paul has been talking about a special relationship of marriage and now he picks up two more relationships. He urges that the relationship between children and their parents and parents and their children should be just as God said in the Ten Commandments. Obedience is very important and of course God requires the same of us. Paul does add a very important point. Fathers have a responsibility to handle their children well, to train them well and to be sensitive to them. To demand obedience without doing what we can do is unreasonable.

He continues about talking about slaves and masters. His comments must not be seen in any way as an endorsement of slavery however; he makes it clear how people should behave if they are in that situation. Slaves are to work hard in obedience as to the Lord but masters are also required to show respect because they will be accountable to God for the way that they treat those who have come under their care.

In this letter Paul has had much to say about our blessings in Christ, our identity in Christ and what it means to be part of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has spoken about great themes such as being chosen, being predestined, being adopted and being redeemed. He has been clear about practical Christian living and about how our married life, our family life and our working life are places which demonstrate Christ in us. However, Paul realises that we are in an intense spiritual battle, the devil has his schemes and plans to try to destroy us and to spoil God's plans. Satan hates what God loves and he will do everything to try to undermine what God wants to do. Jesus has defeated him but we need to enforce that victory because as Satan can no longer attack Jesus, he is allowed to attack the people of the Lord Jesus, the church.

Paul describes armour that we can have which enables us to stand firm and have the victory over the devil. We must remember that our battle is a spiritual battle and therefore we need spiritual weapons and spiritual protection. Truth and integrity are vital in our protection. Righteousness has to be at the core of what we believe, say, think and do. We must always be ready to move with the gospel because that is the part of the way that God keeps us safe, they we are literally on the front foot in giving testimony to Jesus. Faith and confidence in God will always be necessary because the evil

one has many lies and doubts and fears to through in our direction. The salvation that Jesus has provided must govern our thinking. So many battles are won and lost in the mind, so our mentality needs to be too rest in the knowledge that we are safe in Jesus' hands. God's word becomes a sword that we can use to deal with all the things that come against us and our prayer life which expresses dependence upon God again is an effective weapon. Praying in tongues and our own language, praying ourselves and praying with others but essentially spending time in God's presence is something the enemy hates. Paul requests pray for his own ministry, he knows he is dependent upon God to be fearless and bold. Paul finishes the letter with a reference to Tychchus, this man was one of several who Paul valued as a dear friend in the ministry.

May the Lord take this summary of the 6 chapters of Ephesians and enable you to be effective as you serve Christ. May you know your place in the body of Christ and with your fellow believers reflect the love of God which is so evident in Christ who died for us, who rose from the dead for us, who ascended to heaven for us and who one day will return for us.