

Ephesians

Introduction

The book of Ephesians is a treasure. It is clear, easy to understand, containing much for the growth of every believer. Many believe it to be the richest of Paul's epistles. It contains insightful information about God's sovereign purposes, our redemption in Christ (salvation), how He provides that salvation, the manifold riches of His grace toward those who believe, precisely when He chose to save us, the Church Age indwelling of the Holy Spirit, His work in the believer, instructions for living: personal, marital and family, the treatment of others, and a greater insight on spiritual warfare than found in any of Paul's other letters, etc. It is a standalone work for any believer! All will do well to read it, study it, and put it to memory.

Many authors and commentators have written with excellence about the book of Ephesians. Therefore, I will not write exhaustively on the fundamental and clearer passages, but do hope to answer questions and give greater insight into some of the otherwise passed over or under-addressed verses/passages.

Author

The autograph is clear as detailed within the first verse. "*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God*" (Ephesians 1:1a). (For the life, times, and teachings of Paul, refer to Acts 8–28 and his other 12 epistles.)

To Whom Written

Paul answers this in clarity undebated. "*To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus*" (Ephesians 1:1b). The expression "*and faithful in Christ Jesus*" points out that the letter was intentionally written as a circular letter—meaning that it was intended to be circulated among several churches.

Date of the Epistle

The epistle to the Ephesians was likely somewhere between A.D. 60–62 from a Roman prison (see Ephesians 3:1, 4:1 and 6:20). Some would suggest A.D. 57–59 from Caesarea, but this is less likely. The other "prison epistles" are Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. These were written in the same time period. For this reason, the four letters/books are referred to as the "prison epistles."

Historical and Applicational Insight

When examining the Scriptures from a historical overview, one will see that there is a beautiful picture of God's patient work with the Ephesians. From the time Paul first arrived in Ephesus (Acts 18:19–21), to his elongated second visit/stay (Acts 19:1–20:1), his meeting with the Ephesians elders at Miletus (Acts 20:15–38) where he ministered to them warning about future false teachers, false teaching and the manifold difficulties they would face, and climaxing with a letter from Jesus to the Ephesians leadership—via John from Patmos (Revelation 2:1–7), we see that the Lord was working with them by way of a beautiful and patient ministry. This is how God works with all of us. He begins a relationship and does not abandon it—even if it means nurturing, warning, and even disciplining those He loves. Herein I would suggest a careful reading of the references above with prayerful consideration

of our own lives. God loves us and is patient in His ministry toward us. However, we (by His grace) are to believe all He has said and done, follow personalized instruction and prodding through His word and Spirit, and trust Him for deeper and greater love, growth, and obedience, as we mature in our devotional and personal worship, study, prayer life, and servanthood.

This letter is a reminder of God's great love for us and an exhortation to walk in the grace He has provided every one of us.

A Lesson from the Church in Ephesus

The passage cited above from the Book of the Revelation (2:1–7) shows us that the Ephesians did not fully embrace what Paul was emphasizing to them in the introduction of this letter. He was reminding them that the salvation they enjoyed was all of God and that it was God's good pleasure to save them. This fact should have made the Ephesians (like all others) genuinely thankful, legitimate worshippers who embody deep love for the Lord. However, as we read in the Revelation account, they fell short of fully grasping the important lesson contained in this little epistle.

One should understand that the warning given the Ephesians concerning the removal of their "lampstand" (candle) was an indication that their testimony was undesirable. It was not a loss of salvation! Jesus was warning them that He would cease to use them because this loveless service was needing rectification. The Ephesians were saved! Yet, they needed a revival of love for the Lord.

We too may learn from this lesson. Our testimony is important, and remembering all God has done for us will motivate us in our love and obedience to His will.

The Church member as well as those in occupational ministry will do well to heed the lessons of this epistle as well as the lessons from the historical bird's-eye view. The little book of Ephesians carries a big message. It will bless, enrich, challenge, and equip every believer.

May the Lord bless you as you continually study His word.