

A Study of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians

Many times we look at the congregations of the New Testament and we think of them as the cream of the crop, the best of the best, the models of what we are to be. The truth is that these congregations were much more like our congregation that we think. These congregations had blessings and challenges just like we do. The apostle Paul did as much guiding, leading and rebuking as he did motivating and complimenting the people for their faith.

As we look at these congregations we pray that God leads us to see that there is much that we can learn from the guidance and teachings that God gave them through the apostle Paul. We will also pray that our congregation can also grow through that same guidance and teaching.

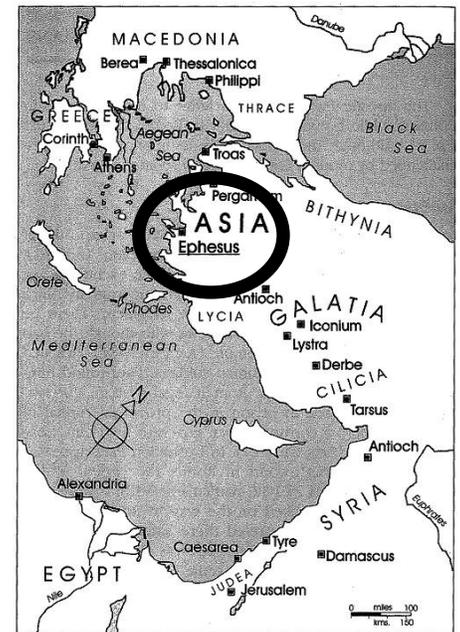
The Letter to the Ephesians

Who were the Ephesians?

- A center of commerce and travel for the Roman world
- Located on the Aegean Sea, right off the Mediterranean Sea
- Had a Jewish cultural center with a synagogue
- It was a center for the arts and religion with temples, libraries and large beautiful houses

Why did Paul write to the Ephesians?

- Paul wanted to start the church in Ephesus much faster than God allowed him to. However, God sent him to Macedonia first.
- When he returns from Macedonia on his second journey he leaves Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus and promises to return
- Paul comes to Ephesus on his third journey and stays there for three years, his longest stay at any church.
- One of the 4 captivity letters. Paul wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon while he was under house arrest in Rome. (61 AD).
- This letter focuses on how the church responds to the great love of Christ, its head.
- The book of Ephesians is a letter to build up Christians with the Gospel. These Christians are seeking to grow in the Word. Paul does that by digging into pure Gospel truths that show the depth of God's love for his people.



Ephesians: Chapter 1

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: ² Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Paul uses the normal pattern of his letters which has three parts.
 1. Identity of author
 2. His readers
 3. A Greeting
- What were some things that come to mind when we hear the name Paul? **Conversion, Persecution, Pharisee, Saul, Imprisoned, Apostle of the Gospel, Teacher, Preacher, Missionary, Writer, Thorn in the Flesh,**
2. Why should Paul's conversion be at the top of the list of things that come to mind when we hear Paul's name? **His conversion is really his call into the Jesus' service. At his conversion he is shown his only way to heaven and our only way to heaven was through Jesus. Jesus took this sinful man away from zealous persecution of the Gospel to a great missionary of the Gospel. What else can Jesus do?**
3. What about the greeting in Paul's letters that makes them special and have meaning? **Not just, I have been thinking about you, or how are you doing, or best wishes, but God's grace and mercy are yours in Christ ~ big intro from God's Apostle and missionary.**

Read Ephesians 1: 3-6

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

4. Predestination or election is a doctrine of the pure grace of God. So often when we look at predestination we spend so much time thinking about what God does not tell us, that we miss what God does tell us and what he wants us to know when he tells it to us.
 - How many blessings do we receive from Jesus? (V3) **Every single one ~~~~ not wants, but as God see fit for his purpose ~ every one we need**
 - When did God show this grace? (V4) **Before the creation of the world ~ we usually think about Jesus, or Bethlehem, but here it is long before that God loved us**
 - Why did God choose you or me for this great blessing? (V4) **We don't know, he just tells us that it is the truth**
 - What has God done then, throughout eternity to bring about his good will? (V5) **He sent his Son to die, He sends his Holy Spirit to work faith in hearts to believe**
 - How does God make these very special blessings my own? (V3,5) **Through Jesus, not through us**
 - How does God want us to feel when we hear these words? (V3,6) **loved, comforted and saved**

➤ What does God want us to know about our salvation through this section?

Our salvation is a gift from God. Our salvation is completely an act of love of God, there is nothing that we do.

Read Ephesians 1: 7-12

⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. ⁹And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

¹¹In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹²in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

5. What picture does the word redemption bring to mind?

To be bought back from something ~ to be reclaimed

6. What are we redeemed from?

We are redeemed from sin, death and the devil

7. According to V.7-10 what role in salvation does God the Father play? The Son? Us?

It was God's plan, his love that made this possible.

It was the Son's blood that redeemed us

There is no part in this for us to play --- God the Father and the Son did this for us.

8. What is the mystery that Paul is talking about?

The mystery of God's great love and the why of that love.

Why does God do anything that he does?

Why would he love me? Why would he choose me?

9. What's the only answer we can come up with?

It is God's love ~ His grace is a mystery to us ~ we cannot explain it

10. Why does this answer have to be good for us?

We can't comprehend how great that love is.

We even say, the grace of God which surpasses our understanding will keep your hearts and lives

However, since God says it, it is something that we believe

11. The only possible clue might be in verse 11: according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹²in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

Even after reading this, we don't have any personal answer we only have an answer for God. What is that answer for why? **It was God's Will that this happened**

12. What kind of plan would you devise to get into heaven? **We might use works, we might have a standard of good, we might choose some that we like**

13. What would the rules or guidelines of your plan be?

Goodness, earning

14. What is the difference between your plan and God's?

God's plan is according to his plan which we do not understand. His plan is the only plan that is completely objective. It is also the only plan that allows everyone to be saved.

He has saved murderers, adulterers, prostitutes, thieves and so on. People that we would not have taken a second look at, or not chosen because of the outward, God has chosen and continues to choose

Read Ephesians 4: 13

¹³ **And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.**

15. In these first verses we see the Triune God in all his glory. The word Trinity is never mentioned in Scripture, but the teaching is. Where in these verses have we seen all three persons of the Trinity?

1. God the Father: **V 3 – God's possession**

2. God the Son: **V 1**

3. God the Holy Spirit: **V 2**

14. What does the Holy Spirit do? **Creates and Builds Faith**

15. How is the Holy Spirit's work a sign and seal of God choosing us? **Without faith it is impossible to please God ~ it is only through the holy Spirit that we have faith**

16. How is the Holy Spirit a sign and seal of all of God's other promises as well?

Since God has done this great thing for us, he will bless us with all the other things as well.

It is a package deal. We can't have faith without forgiveness, life and salvation

Read Ephesians 1: 15-23

¹⁵ **For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸ I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, ²⁰ which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.**

17. Why does Paul have reason for thanksgiving? V. 15,16

I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

18. While the Spirit has worked faith, what other blessing does Paul pray that the Spirit give to the Ephesians? **may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸ I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you,**

19. Who is ruling over all things until it is time that God gives us the great promise of heaven?
Christ rules over all things

20. Why is Christ ruling over all things for the church a great blessing for the elect?
Christ is in control, there is no one who is powerful like him