EPHESIANS

Ephesians
Key Verse:

INTRODUCTION TO EPHESIANS

The Epistle to the Ephesians was written by the Apostle Paul during his imprisonment in Rome (60-61 A.D.). Ephesus was an important trade center and the leading city of Asia Minor. Paul had spent three years of his third missionary journey there, and from this ministry, not only the church in Ephesus, but also the seven churches of Asia Minor took root and grew. It was here that Paul caught the vision for reaching the whole Gentile world through Rome, the center of the Empire (Acts 19:10,21).

In this Epistle Paul does not deal with the kind of practical problems of faith and life that he addresses in 1 Corinthians. Rather, he writes about Jesus Christ and about the "mystery of the gospel"--God's great purpose of world redemption through Jesus. The mystery of the gospel is that God loves the whole world, and Jesus died to save Gentiles as well as Jews. So the church must be a missionary community, always reaching out to the non-Christian world to bring all kinds of people to a saving knowledge of Christ and into true unity in the body of Christ. We must welcome one another in love, maintain spiritual order in our fellowship, and be fully equipped with spiritual armor and weapons to do battle with our adversary, the devil. Paul calls himself an ambassador in chains, imprisoned because of his declaration of this mystery of the gospel, and he asks for prayer that he may fearlessly proclaim the gospel.

THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL

Ephesians 1:1-10 (Fri.) September 1

Key Verse: 1:10

1. Spiritual blessings in Christ (1-8)

Paul was an apostle-missionary by the will of God. God also chose the Ephesian saints and us in Christ to be holy and blameless in his sight. He redeemed us by the blood of Jesus and forgave our sins by his free grace. We don't deserve to be called children of God, but by grace he adopted us as his children. Now, we no longer have to live self-centered, meaningless lives. We can live for God's glory as God's own children.

2. The mystery of his will (9-10)

God has a great plan for his world. He created a beautiful, good world for his own glory. But because of man's sin, the blessed world became a cursed world. God's plan for the fullness of time is to restore all creation. So he sent Christ to die for the sins of all mankind. When men believe the gospel, their sins are forgiven and God's kingdom comes into their hearts. Someday

Christ will come again; he will restore creation order, and God's kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven.

Prayer: Father, your kingdom come; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

One Word: All things united in Christ

TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY

Ephesians 1:11-14 (Sat.) September 2

Key Verse: 1:12

1. God's master plan (11-12)

God is working out his plan of world redemption. He chose Paul and the apostles to be the first to hope in Christ. He raised them up to be witnesses to the ends of the earth to the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection--salvation from sin, eternal life and the kingdom of God. Through this gospel, mankind is brought to obey God's will--to the praise of his glory.

2. You also were included (13-14)

We who have heard the word of truth and believe the gospel are included in God's redemptive history. All who hear and believe the gospel are marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit. The Spirit works in our hearts to change our dirty desires into holy desires and to give us a new birth into a living hope in his eternal kingdom. His work in us is a guarantee of our inheritance in heaven. There he will finish the redemptive work he has started here. God's redemptive work in men's lives is for his glory and for our blessing.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for including me in your plan and for giving me your Holy Spirit.

One Word: To the praise of his glory

PAUL'S PRAYER

Ephesians 1:15-23 (Sun.) September 3

Key Verse: 1:17,18

1. The Spirit of wisdom and revelation (15-17)

Paul first gives thanks for the faith and love of the Christians in Ephesus. His first prayer topic for them is that God may give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that they may know him better. The Holy Spirit is given to us to help us know God and his Son Jesus better.

2. The eyes of your heart enlightened (18-23)

We need physical sight to see the physical world and we need spiritual eyes to see spiritual things. When the eyes of our hearts are enlightened, our hopes and desires are changed. We can have glorious hope in the heavenly kingdom. We can also see God working with resurrection power in our own lives and in the lives of others. We cannot change ourselves or anyone else, but God can--by his almighty power. Finally, all of our hopes are focused on Christ, whom God exalted to the highest place in the heavenly realm, and who will come again to reign over everything.

Prayer: Lord, give me the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, and enlighten the eyes of my heart so that I may know you better.

One Word: To know him better

MADE ALIVE IN CHRIST

Ephesians 2:1-7 (Mon.) September 4

Key Verse: 2:4,5a

1. Dead in sin (1-3)

When we were cut off from God by sin, we may have looked alive--like a cut flower in a vase--but we were dead. We were prisoners of sinful desires and ruled by Satan. We gratified the desires and cravings of our sinful natures. Like everyone else, we were objects of God's wrath.

2. Alive in Christ (4-7)

God who is rich in mercy did not abandon us to death and hell nor leave us in our misery. He loves us. He raised us from the dead with Christ; he made us alive when we were dead in sin. He seated us with him in the heavenly realms. The power by which God raised Jesus from the dead is at work in us to change us into children of God who bear the image of Jesus. It is by his grace alone that we have been saved.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for not giving up on me when I was dead in sin and could only be an object of wrath. Thank you for raising me to a new life in Christ. Please continue the work you have begun in me and in those for whom I pray.

One Word: Once I was dead; now I am alive

WE ARE GOD'S WORKMANSHIP

Ephesians 2:8-10 (Tue.) September 5

Key Verse: 2:10

1. Saved by grace through faith (8-9)

We were dead in sin. Dead men can't save themselves. Only God could save us. He didn't have to, for we were rebels who deserved to die and go to hell. But our Creator God loved us. There was nothing in us worthy of his love, but by his great mercy, he sent Jesus to die for our sins. This is grace. We claim God's gift of grace by faith alone. There is nothing we can do to merit God's mercy or deserve this gift of his grace. By faith in Jesus alone we can claim the salvation which our loving God provided.

2. God created us for good works (10)

God created us and he saved us. Each one of us was created by a loving God for a good purpose. When we were slaves of sin, following the desires of our sinful nature, we could not do the good works for which we were created. But God saved us by his grace so that we might serve him without fear and glorify his name. Our lives have meaning only when we live in his will and do his work.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for creating me for good works and for saving me by your grace.

One Word: Created in Christ Jesus for good works

HE IS OUR PEACE

Ephesians 2:11-18 (Wed.) September 6

Key Verse: 2:14a

1. Remember what you were (11-12)

The Jews who called themselves "the circumcision" regarded Gentiles as the objects of God's wrath. But the Gentiles who accepted Jesus became people of God. It is the amazing grace of God that Gentiles could be included among God's people and inherit the promises and covenants of God. Before we met Jesus, we were outsiders, Gentiles without hope and without God in the world.

2. Brought near by the blood of Christ (13-18)

Gentiles were once far away, while Jews were near to God. But being near is not close enough. Jesus came and preached peace to those who were near and to those who were far away. Jesus died on the cross to save us from sin. Everyone is a sinner; everyone needs forgiveness. Everyone needs Jesus. Jesus gives us peace with God. Sinners who stand together at the foot of the cross cannot be enemies. We are reconciled to God and to one another only at the foot of the cross.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your grace that brought me forgiveness and peace.

One Word: He himself is our peace

GOD'S HOLY TEMPLE

Ephesians 2:19-22 (Thur.) September 7

Key Verse: 2:20

1. One Spirit, one household (19)

All those who believe in Jesus are redeemed by his blood and have access to the Father by the Holy Spirit. Racial, ethnic, sexual or cultural differences cannot keep us from Jesus or divide the body of Christ. We are all fellow citizens in God's kingdom. We are members of God's household.

2. The foundation and the cornerstone (20-22)

God's temple is not made with brick and stone. It is composed of God's people. The foundation is the Bible--the word of God revealed through the prophets and the apostles. The Bible is the Christians' authority for faith and life. The chief cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. He is the one who holds the building together. We who belong to him are being built together into a holy temple in which God the Holy Spirit lives.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for calling me to be a part of your body, a small stone in your holy temple. Help me to stand firmly on the foundation, and rejoice in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

One Word: Christ, the chief cornerstone

THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST

Ephesians 3:1-6 (Fri.) September 8

Key Verse: 3:6

1. A prisoner for your sakes (1-2)

How did Paul become a prisoner in Rome? He was hated by his fellow Jews because he had fellowship with Gentiles. He was arrested in Jerusalem because of this. But he was not sorry or discouraged because of this rejection by men. By God's grace, he was an apostle, a missionary to the Gentiles. God had revealed to him in the Bible his purpose to evangelize the Gentiles, and the Risen Christ had personally called him to this task.

2. A steward of the mystery of Christ (3-6)

The mystery which God had revealed to Paul was that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body. Paul stood at the watershed of God's redemptive history. The Jews had occupied a unique place as the custodians of God's history. But

now God’s world redemptive purpose had been made known. All believers are heirs of God's promise in Christ Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, help me to pray and work for your great world mission purpose, no matter what the cost.

One Word: A hidden mystery revealed

THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST

Ephesians 3:7-13 (Sat.) September 9

Key Verse: 3:8

1. By the gift of God's grace (7-11)

Paul regarded his mission as God's great grace in his life. He had been an enemy of God, a persecutor of the church of God, but God forgave him. Not only this, God had given him the privilege of preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ to the Gentiles. This was God’s amazing grace. The Creator God wants all creatures to worship him. The church is God’s instrument to make his salvation known. He saved us so that we might be stewards of his gospel, and share it with the whole world.

2. We may freely approach God (12-13)

Because Jesus died to free all mankind from bondage to sin, all people may freely and confidently approach God in prayer through Jesus. So Paul the prisoner encourages the Gentile Christians for whom he is suffering not to be discouraged, but to come to God in prayer.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your grace given to a useless sinner. Thank you for the unsearchable riches of Christ. I now come confidently to you in prayer.

One Word: Amazing grace

THAT CHRIST MAY DWELL IN YOUR HEARTS

Ephesians 3:14-21 (Sun.) September 10

Key Verse 3:17

1. So that Christ may dwell in your hearts (14-17a)

Paul had one prayer topic for his sheep. It was that Christ might indwell them (Jn 15:5). Believers are different from non-believers because Christ dwells in the hearts of believers. He is the source of our new life. He is the fountainhead of real love. How is it that Christ dwells in us?

Christ comes in when we invite him in. He dwells in our hearts by faith. He strengthens us in our inner being by the power by his Spirit.

2. Power to grasp the dimensions of love (17b-21)

If Christ dwells in us, we are rooted and established in his love. Christ's love is sacrificial. He loved us and gave himself for us on the cross. When we repent of sin and receive his mercy and forgiveness, his love comes in to fill our hearts. His love is wide enough to include all people; deep enough to forgive and heal the worst sinner; long enough to stretch from the beginning of history to the end; high enough to reach up and touch the very heart of God. How can we know love that surpasses knowledge? By knowing and loving Jesus, who loved us first.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, come and dwell in me.

One Word: By faith, Christ dwells in me

LIVE A LIFE WORTHY OF YOUR CALLING

Ephesians 4:1-6 (Sun.) October 1

Key Verse: 4:1

1. Bearing with one another in love (1-2)

No matter what our circumstances, we must live like God’s children. Paul did so, even in prison. We can live lives worthy of our calling when we grow in the image of Jesus. He was humble and gentle. He bore with his disciples, and he bears with us in love. Jesus’ love builds up. We also must bear with one another in love to build each other up in Jesus.

2. Keep the unity of the Spirit (3-6)

Jesus prayed that his disciples might be one (Jn 17). We must make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. How can we do this when we live with divided hearts in a divided world as part of a divided church? Peace and unity are only possible when we come to Jesus with repentant hearts and acknowledge his lordship over all of life. And we must forgive one another. By faith alone we know that there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of us all. Divisions are because of our sin.

Prayer: Lord, give me the humble and gentle mind of Jesus. Give me a forgiving spirit and your peace.

One Word: A life worthy of Christ's calling

HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN

Ephesians 4:7-13 (Mon.) October 2

Key Verse: 4:12

1. He gave gifts of grace (7-12)

There is one Lord, but there is a diversity of gifts which Christ gives the captives he sets free. Christ, who descended to this world in his incarnation, ascended to the highest heavens and poured out his Spirit on his own people. He equips his Church to serve him. Each of us receives different gifts, but every gift he gives has one purpose: To prepare God's people for service so that the whole body of Christ may be built up (12).

2. Until we become mature (13)

Divisions among God's people are a mark of immaturity. The goal of our growth is unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God--that is, maturity in Christ. We must encourage one another, and build up one another. And, instead of competing with one another, we must each strive to grow in Christ's love and in knowledge of him until we attain to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Prayer: Lord, help me to use the gifts you have given me to glorify your name and build up your people.

One Word: Build up the body of Christ

SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

Ephesians 4:14-16 (Tue.) October 3

Key Verse: 4:15

1. No longer tossed back and forth (14)

An infant in Christ is moved by every convincing speaker; he sometimes becomes confused by the deceitful scheming of crafty men who are trying to destroy the work of God. So it is necessary that each believer grows up to maturity in Christ. Peter says that newborn babies crave pure spiritual milk so that by it they may grow up (1Pe 2:2). That milk is God's word. We must study the Bible and obey its teachings. This is how we can grow to maturity in Christ.

2. Speaking the truth in love (15-16)

A mature Christian is a growing Christian. He loves truth; he can discern what is true and what is false. Sometimes the truth hurts. But if we speak the truth in love, the body of Christ will be built up in faith, in love for Jesus and in love for one another. Deceitful lies do not build up--they tear down. We must grow up into Christ the Head. When we are connected to the Head, we are held together by him. Then we are mutually built up in love as each part does its work.

Prayer: Lord, help me to learn to speak the truth in love, so that I may build up your people.

One Word: Speak the truth in love

PUT ON THE NEW SELF

Ephesians 4:17-24 (Wed.) October 4

Key Verse: 4:24

1. Put off the old self (17-19)

God is the source of truth and life. Once, when we lived without God's truth in our hearts we could not think clearly, so our thinking was futile. As Christians, we must no longer think like godless people. When we allow our thought-world to be captured by sensuality and impurity, our hearts become hard, our understanding dark, and we are separated from the life of God. When we harden our hearts toward God we become ignorant and insensitive, and we are deceived by our sinful desires. Sinful desires grow when we give in to them. These things belong to the old self which we must put off.

2. Put on the new self (20-24)

When we know Christ, God's truth is planted in our hearts. Christ rules our thought-world, and gives us a new attitude toward others, ourselves and the world. We must put off the old self with its corrupt and deceitful desires, and put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Prayer: Lord, help me to put off my old self. Put your truth in my heart, so that I may put on the new self.

One Word: Put on the new self

DO NOT GRIEVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

Ephesians 4:25-32 (Thur.) October 5

Key Verse: 4:30

1. Do not give the devil a foothold (25-28)

Three things are mentioned here which give the devil a foothold in our lives: First, lying to one another. It takes courage to speak the truth in love. Second, holding anger in our hearts. We must get rid of all anger before the sun goes down. Third, depending on others for material help instead of working. We should work so that we can have something to share with those in need.

2. Speak to help others (29-31)

What we say makes a difference. Our words should be limited to words that build up others. When bitterness, anger, slander, or a grudge against someone is in my heart, the words that come from my mouth grieve the Holy Spirit and hurt others.

3. Be kind and compassionate (32)

Kindness and compassion are not just to make a good impression on strangers. They are for those closest to us. We must forgive one another, for we are all forgiven sinners.

Prayer: Lord, help me not to grieve your Spirit. Help me to build up others.

One Word: Don't grieve the Holy Spirit

FIND OUT WHAT PLEASES THE LORD

Ephesians 5:1-14 (Fri.) October 6

Key Verse: 5:10

1. Be imitators of God (1-2)

As God's children, we should imitate our Father. Jesus shows us how. We grow in his image by loving others as Christ loved us.

2. Avoid immorality, impurity and greed (3-7)

No immoral, impure or greedy person has any inheritance in the kingdom of God. Immorality is specified as sexual immorality; impurity includes dirty jokes and foolish or obscene talk. Greed is equated to idolatry. God's people must strive for holiness.

3. Find out what pleases the Lord (8-14)

What pleases the Lord? He is pleased when we live as children of light. The fruit of light is goodness, righteousness and truth. Once we were darkness, but now we are light in the Lord. We are light because Christ shines on us. We cannot be pure by our own effort. But when Christ shines on us we can be light in a dark world and please God.

Prayer: Lord, shine on me today, so that I can live as a child of light. Help me to do what pleases you.

One Word: Find out what pleases God and do it

ALWAYS GIVE THANKS FOR EVERYTHING

Ephesians 5:15-20 (Sat.) October 7

Key Verse: 5:20

1. Make the most of every opportunity (15-17)

God's people should not live aimlessly from day to day with no thought or direction. We must be wise. Especially, we should look for opportunities to please God--and not miss a one!

2. Make music in your hearts to God (18-19)

The Christian life is joyful and exciting. We do not have to turn to wine for excitement and joy. God gives every Christian his Spirit as a gift. If we are full of God's Spirit, we can make music in our hearts to God. We can encourage each other if our hearts are full of music and our lips full of praise.

3. Always give thanks (20)

It is not always easy to be thankful, but God commands us to give thanks always, for everything. If we think about Jesus, we can be thankful. If we think about ourselves and compare ourselves with others, we are always complaining.

Prayer: Lord, fill me with your Spirit so that I can make music in my heart and be always thankful to you for everything.

One Word: Give thanks for everything

SUBMIT TO ONE ANOTHER

Ephesians 5:21-33 (Sun.) October 8

Key Verses: 5:32,33

1. Wives, submit to your husbands (21-24)

The mysterious relationship between Christ and his church is compared to the relationship between a husband and wife. Spiritual order in the family is important. A wife should respect and give in to her husband. However, each believer has a spiritual union with Christ. He is our Savior and true Husband. He is the Lord of our lives.

2. Husbands, love your wives (25-33)

It is not hard for a wife to submit to a husband who loves her as Christ loved the church. Christ gave himself up for the church; he died to make her pure. He loves her as his own body. His union with her is holy, pure and permanent. We know Christ loves us, so we joyfully submit to him. We are cleansed by the word of God (Jn 15:3). Husbands must love their wives as they love themselves. All of us must be filled with the Spirit and submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (21).

Prayer: Lord, thank you for Jesus, my true Husband. Grant spiritual order in our homes and in our church.

One Word: Reverence Christ as Lord; submit to one another.

CHILDREN AND PARENTS, SLAVES AND MASTERS

Ephesians 6:1-9 (Mon.) October 9

Key Verse: 6:1

1. Children, obey your parents (1-4)

Children should respect and obey their parents. Parents should not make selfish or unreasonable demands on their children--but children need parental discipline. Parents must bring up their children in the training and instruction of the Lord. A home with love and spiritual order is a happy home.

2. Slaves and masters (5-9)

Slavery is not a part of our culture today, but this passage has relevant application to relationships and attitudes in the working place. God's people should work for their employers wholeheartedly, as if serving the Lord. We should work hard not only when someone is watching. Joseph in Genesis is a good example. Employers should treat employees fairly, remembering that everyone must give an account before God someday.

Prayer: Lord, help the people of this land to overcome pride, and make environments in the home and in society in which people can grow and your name be honored.

One Word: Spiritual order gives peace and joy

THE ARMOR OF GOD

Ephesians 6:10-24 (Tue.) October 10

Key Verse: 6:10,11

1. Our struggle is a spiritual one (10-12)

Our enemies are not people. The devil is our enemy, and our real battle is a spiritual one. We cannot defeat such an enemy by our human strength, so we must be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

2. Put on the armor of God (13-24)

We can be strong when we put on the whole armor of God. The belt of truth helps us keep our balance. The breastplate of righteousness protects out hearts from temptation. With the gospel of peace on our feet, we are ready to go anywhere to preach the gospel. The gospel gives peace with God and peace among men. The shield of faith guards our hearts from the arrows of doubt and fear. The helmet that protects our heads is our assurance of salvation; we wear it with a shout of victory. The sword of the Spirit, the Bible, is our one weapon. The Holy Spirit works through his word. It is essential that we be alert and prayerful.

Prayer: Lord, clothe me in your armor so that I may fight the devil today.

One Word: Be strong in the Lord