

~ The Study of the Life of Paul~

Ephesians Overview: Prison Epistle #2

Today we are looking at the Epistle to the Ephesians. Paul arrived in Rome in the spring of 61ad, and shortly after arriving, Paul and Luke wrote the book of Acts and Hebrews. Now, several months have gone by and it is near the end of 61ad and Paul writes his second prison epistle of five while under house arrest in Rome. We know it is one of Paul's prison epistles because three times Paul speaks of his chains, 3:1; 4:1; **6:20**. Paul was an ambassador in chains for the Lord Jesus Christ, praying that he would speak the mystery of the Gospel with boldness in Rome. And indeed, he did as we see God was working mightily through him during his two year stay in Rome, Phil 1:13-15.

I believe it was Paul's second prison epistle after Hebrews because Timothy has not yet joined Paul in Rome. Remember Paul invites Timothy to come see him in Rome at the end of the epistle to the Hebrews, knowing that Timothy just got released from prison, Hebrews 13:23. So while Timothy is traveling from Caesarea to Rome, I believe Paul writes this letter to the Ephesians. The Ephesian church was deep on his heart, just as all the churches were dear to him. Paul wrote Hebrews out of his concern that many of the Jewish Christians were getting swept away from the Faith and falling back under the Law. And in that epistle we saw many harsh rebukes and admonitions to hold fast to Jesus and persevere. This epistle to the Ephesians isn't that kind of letter. It is a letter to the Church explaining the mystery of God's plan of Redemption in Christ and the hope we have in Christ Jesus. In fact, that phrase, "In Christ," "In Him," "In whom," "In Love," "In the Beloved," is repeated 57 times in these six chapters. It's a letter describing who we are in Christ and all the Blessings we have in Him. It is a letter describing our Fellowship and oneness IN CHRIST. A letter of edification to build up the body of Christ to bring the Church into unity in Christ. And out from this Fellowship we have with God, we then can have Fellowship and unity with other believers. Paul explains this in two sections. 1) In Chapters 1-3 he first tells us of God's Eternal Purpose and who we are in Christ, and then 2) in chapters 4-6 is the practical application admonishing us to walk in this newness of life in Christ.

I believe he writes this letter to them as a response to a good report he heard from Tychicus, **Ephesians 1:15**. It had been over three years since Paul had seen the brethren in Ephesus and now Tychicus had come from Ephesus to Rome to see the Apostle Paul in chains. In **Ephesians 6:21-22**, we see Tychicus is the one whom Paul chooses to deliver this letter, as well as the letter to the Colossians and Philemon, Col 4:7, Asian churches, because Tychicus was from Asia, Acts 20:4 and he was Paul's runner and many occasions, Titus 3:12; 2 Timothy 4:12. Tychicus had been traveling with Paul on his third journey since he left Ephesus as one of the seven travel companions traveling to Jerusalem bearing the contribution for the saints in Jerusalem, Acts 20:4. Tychicus probably stayed with Paul for the two years while he was in prison in Caesarea, but after his release, Tychicus wasn't onboard the ship to Rome, Acts 27:1-2. So, I believe after Paul left Caesarea, Tychicus probably went back to his hometown in Ephesus, and then after winter, traveled to Rome to visit Paul.

Even though Paul had received a good report, he is aware of the strains of bringing many different types of people together into one family, namely the pressures between Jews and Gentiles; pagans who used to worship false gods living alongside devout Jews who came from the Hellenistic synagogues bound under the Law. And now they have to find a way to live together among their struggles and prejudices. So in this letter, Paul explains how to work through these prejudices and live as one body in the family and household of God. And the answer is to live IN CHRIST in His Love.

It was important to Paul that Ephesus remain strong. This was his desire for all the churches, but specifically Ephesus because Paul viewed Ephesus as the new central hub for Christianity. We saw Paul move his headquarters from Antioch Syria over to a more central location at Ephesus. And we see the importance of this church because after Paul is released from Rome, he will travel to Ephesus and ordain Timothy as the bishop of Ephesus to continued Paul's work and ministry, 1 Tim 1:18; 6:20; 2 Tim 1:6; 13-14. Paul begins strengthening the Church and the fellowship of believers, both Jew and Gentile, by

first explaining the sovereign plan of God from eternity past, **Ephesians 3:8-13**. That section is really the premise to the entire letter. So Paul begins this letter by explaining the “**The Eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.**”

God’s Eternal Purpose in Christ: Chapters 1-3

Chapter 1- God’s Sovereign Choice from Eternity Past

Verses 1-4

- This epistle begins explaining God’s Sovereign plan to reconcile mankind to Himself, **1:1-4**.
- Notice who this is addressed to... the faithful **in Christ**.
 - Right from the beginning Paul tells us how to get “in Christ.” We must have faith... we who are in Christ are the faithful.
- Throughout the entire letter, Paul is very personal by saying “us.” He has blessed US; He has chosen US; He has predestined US.
 - So who is US? Drop down to verse 12... *we who have first trusted in Christ*. We who have believed.
 - The big debate for centuries has been, do I believe because I was chosen, or was I chosen because I believe?
 - This question is easily solved when you understand God’s plan of redemption.
 - The short answer is that God, before the foundation of the world, from eternity past, sovereignly chose the reconciliation and salvation of all mankind to come by no other means than **in His Son Jesus Christ**.
- Before God created the world, He knew that if He created mankind with freewill, man would sin and separate himself from God. Therefore, in His foreknowledge, He predetermined a plan of Salvation in which all who trust in Him can be brought back into right standing with God. We call this reconciliation. And this plan of reconciliation was held safe and placed beforehand “in Christ.”

Verses 5-12

- Therefore, God has made the sovereign choice to place all His promises and blessings and His salvation “**in Christ,**” and all those who believe **in Christ** are therefore adopted “**into Christ,**” reconciled with God and given eternal life, **1:5-12**.
 - 4 times in these 8 verses Paul uses two words to describe God’s sovereign, pre-determined election.
 - purposed, *προτίθημι*- to place beforehand;
 - predestined, *προορίζω*- to mark out beforehand... pre-path
 - The word predestine comes with so much theological baggage it has lost its original meaning.
 - Before the foundation of the world, God pre-pathed, marked out beforehand the path of redemption. And this path is Christ... Jesus is the Way.
 - And all who believe in Jesus are now on this path and in Christ.

Verses 13-14

- Notice the next two verses as Paul goes on to very clearly tell us who it is that are partakers of this inheritance, **1:13-14**.
 - Those who have believed and trusted in Christ after they heard the Gospel, they are sealed in Him; marked as one who is in Christ and given a guarantee of our inheritance, the Holy Spirit, so that when Jesus comes and redeems His purchased possession, we will receive the promise, **1:10**.
 - Notice what is predestined in verse 11, our inheritance according to His plan put in place

before the foundation of the world.

- Therefore, the three promises that are marked out beforehand... pre-pathed are:
 - Inheritance
 - Redemption
 - Adoption (reconciliation)
- Paul then continues in chapter 1 with a prayer for the saints that they might know about this inheritance that has been given to the saints in Christ, **1:15-21**.
- At the end of chapter 1, Paul gives a collective name for those who are in Christ... The Church, His Body, **1:22-23**.
 - This is the fellowship of the mystery that we read earlier in 3:9. The unity of Jews and Gentiles in one body and partakers of the same promise of God.
 - Chapter 2 goes on to describe this fellowship between Jews and Gentiles.

Chapter 2- A New Creation in Christ- the Church

Verses 1-7

- This first section describes how we are brought into this fellowship
- We were once dead in our sins, but God... made us alive together with Christ, v.1-7
 - It is by grace through faith that we are saved and built upon the work of Christ, **2:8-10**.

Verses 11-18

- Describe the church being made of Jews and Gentiles, who have now become one new man in Christ.
- The Church was born on the Day of Pentecost, the Feast of Weeks.
 - This Feast represents the Church in that God ordained two loaves of bread be offered, symbolizing the Jews and the Gentiles, and it is the only Feast which leaven is used in the bread.
 - Leaven is a type of sin, puffs up. It was no surprise to God that there would be sin within the Church because the Church is made up of a bunch of redeemed sinners.

Verses 19-22

- Paul describes the Church as a building, a holy Temple that God is building in which God dwells.
- Jesus said, I will build, *οικοδομέω*, My Church, Matt 16:18.
- Paul uses this same word in various forms to describe how God is building His Church: built upon, *ἐποικοδομέω*, (2:10- created upon His good works), built together, *συνοικοδομέω*, for a deeply intense dwelling place, *κατοικητήριον*.

Chapter 3- The Mystery of Christ and the Church

Verses 1-21

- Paul explains God's eternal purpose is for all those who trust in Him, Jew and Gentile alike, to be partakers of His promise in Christ.
 - Verses 8-13 which we already read is the premise to the letter

The Eternal Purpose of God was accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord and we have access into this plan through faith in Him.

- And now all those who are in Christ are called the Church, the called out ones, and the Church is now the vehicle and the means by which Salvation goes out to the world, v.21

Our Walk in Christ: Chapters 4-6

Chapter 4- Walk Worthy of the Lord

Verses 1-6

- The oneness of the Church in Christ keeping the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace
 - One body, one Spirit, on hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father

Verses 7-16

- Gifts to edify the body, the five-fold ministry for the equipping and edifying of the saints in love
 - Verse 8 is describing the Old Testament saints being rescued out from Abraham's bosom and placed in Christ

Verses 17-32

- Walking in this newness of life by putting on the new man... being enclothed in Christ.

Chapters 5&6- Walking in Christ

Verses 1-20

- Imitate Christ, v.1; walk in love, v.2; walk as children of the Light, v.8; walk carefully in wisdom, v.15

Verses 21-33

- Submitting to one another in love by God's designed order: The Father → Jesus → Man → Woman, 1 Cor 11:1-3, 12
 - The husband doesn't lord over the wife but is a loving sacrifice as Christ was to the Church
- Verse 32- the great mystery: But I say... into Christ and into the Church. *εἰς Χριστὸν καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν*.
 - Complete unity and oneness between Christ and the Church

6:1-9

- Paul continues this love for one another.
 - Children, servants, masters all walk in love serving Christ and not men

6:10-18

- Walking in the power and strength of the Lord
 - Enclothe yourself with the whole armor of God as we do not fight flesh and blood, but supernatural enemies
 - Belt of Truth; breastplate of Righteousness; feet shod with the Gospel; shield of Faith; helmet of Salvation; sword of the Spirit- the Word, *ῥῆμα*, of God; and praying always.

6:19-24 Ending Salutation

- Paul ends as he does all his letters...

Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen