

Introduction to Ephesians

When

A.D. 60-63, Apostle Paul wrote this letter while imprisoned in Rome. During this time, he also wrote Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, also known as captivity epistles)

To whom

This is a letter that the Apostle Paul sent to the nearby churches in Ephesus, Asia Minor, which is known as the area where he pastored for about three years during his third missionary journey.

City of Ephesus



The city of Ephesus, located in present-day Turkey, was the central city of Asia in the Roman Empire at that time. Due to its geographical location at the intersection of sea and land trade routes, it was a port city that served as a center of transportation and commerce. It was also the center of religion, and the temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the world selected in ancient times, was located there, so many people came from various regions. Not only was it full of idolaters who believed that Artemis brought fertility, but it was also full of sexually depraved practices. Many people ran accommodations for the tourists and sold goods, such as statues of the goddesses and the model of the temple of Artemis.

Purpose

Paul visited Ephesus on his second missionary journey and preached the word of God, but he left Aquila and Priscilla behind because of the persecution of the Jews. After that, on his third missionary journey, he stayed here and taught, first in the synagogue and later in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. (Acts 19:8-9). However, the city of Ephesus, full of idols and sexual immorality, began to change through the Gospel. A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly and started accepting the Gospel. (Acts 19:17-20) In the book of Revelation,

Christians and churches who have experienced such a great work of the Gospel and have been converted are rebuked for forsaking the love they had at first. A Jewish community was formed in Ephesus, and they enforced the Gentile believers to observe Jewish traditions, such as, circumcision, dietary laws, and feasts. And these problems broke the unity of the saints and became a factor hindering the growth of the church. Not only that, but many false teachers also appeared and gave people false teaching. So, in order to protect the believers from this, Paul wrote this letter to strengthen and mature the faith of Christians by awakening them to sound doctrine and holy living.

Special Feature

Ephesians is not a letter addressed to one individual or a particular church, but rather an epistle that deals with universal themes of faith and theology. So, unlike other epistles, rather than dealing with any problem of the church, it describes God's plan for the universal church of Christ and the unity of all things in Christ. In particular, it shows a complete and logical explanation of how the Church, the body of Christ, was created and developed. In discussing this topic, Paul speaks of the truth that the discord and division of all things due to sin will ultimately be restored and be united in Christ alone. Also, Paul teaches of how the people of the kingdom of heaven should live in this world full of sin. Paul teaches that, neither treating everything in the world as sin and only seeking the presence of heaven nor enjoying the pleasures of sin while taking the grace of redemption for granted is not the life of a saint. Paul teaches that Saints must fulfill the role of light and salt to spread the truth and prevent corruption in the world according to the will of God, who has allowed us to live as strangers in this world, hoping for the kingdom of heaven that has not yet arrived.

Therefore, although Ephesians is a short epistle with only six chapters, the main ideas of Paul's theology, such as Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology, are well presented. It deals with topics such as God's election, forgiveness, salvation, grace, and prayer of thanksgiving. Chapter 1-3, the first half of Ephesians, describe the content and richness of the Gospel, and the second half, chapter 4-6, describe the new life of those who experienced God's grace in the form of ethical instruction.

>> Ephesians at a glance (Reference: Living Life)

	Author				Paul		Period	A.D. 60~63
Passage	1:1-14	1:15-23	2:1-3:13	3:14-3:21	4:1-16	4:17-5:21	5:22-6:9	6:10-24
Outline	Songs of Salvation	Paul's Prayer	Status of the Saint	Prayer of the Church	church life of saints	New life of saints	Family life	Spiritual Warfare
Theme	Identity of the Saint				Life of the Saint			
Chapter Highlights	Ch. 1	Ch. 2	Ch. 3		Ch. 4	Ch. 5		Ch. 6
	Christ's Glory in the Church	Reconciliation of the Christ	Paul became Servant of God by Grace		New man in Christ	The Christian's Spirit-filled Life		Put on the full armor of God

Let us Return to the Lord

: Life of Obedience to the Lord



1. Praise

“Cornerstone” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=izrk-erhDdk>

2. Prayer (by the leader or a member)

3. Scripture Reading Ephesians 2:14-22

¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. ¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”

4. Sharing

How do I usually react to people with different opinion? Do you remember any conflicts you have experienced?

5. Unity – the heart of God

“According to Paul, the wisdom of God is most clearly demonstrated, not in eloquent, anointed preaching or exuberant, intense worship, but through racial and ethnic unity in the church. In Acts 13:1-2, Luke takes special care to point out that the early church experienced this unity. In listing out the names of the church leaders in Antioch, he gives their nationalities, too. Why does Luke take the time to tell us the backgrounds and races of these church leaders? The only reason I can come up with is that Luke wanted to show us that the leadership in Antioch was multicultural. Then, that is there in Antioch that the followers of Jesus are first called “Christians”. (Gaining by Losing p.163)

6. Background

At that time, including the church in Ephesus, the early church changed from the Old Testament era to the New Testament era, and they were confused about how to establish the relationship between the Law and the Gospel, and the relationship between Jews and Gentiles. And as the number of Gentiles rapidly increased in the church community, conflicts arose between Jews and Gentiles, and unity and harmony among believers became a problem. Jews and Gentiles had different cultural and religious backgrounds, so it was difficult to become one.

Paul says that they became close to each other through the blood of Jesus Christ and became one body in Christ to form a community (church). In this way, the book of Ephesians urges all the members of the church to become a community where Jesus Christ is the cornerstone and unite and cooperate to accomplish the will of Jesus, and to become a temple where God dwells.

7. Into the Scripture

- 1) What did Jesus accomplish by dying on the cross? (Verses 14-15)

- 2) “Both” (Verse 16) refers to those who are far and those who are near. Who do they mean specifically? (Verse 17)

- 3) What is the new title given to those who have become one body in Christ? (Verse 19)

- 4) The passage says that Jesus “create in himself one new humanity” to unite the Jews and Gentiles. What does this mean? (Verse 15)

- 5) Unity is an essential element to build the community (church). How can we achieve unity? (Verses 21-22)

8. Into Life

- 1) Is the community of faith that I belong to harmonious? What should I do to build a harmonious community?

- 2) Are there any factors that make it difficult for us to become one in our community?
If so, let's share how we can overcome.

Pray together

- 1. Let's pray for our small group to grow and mature together in Christ and become one.**
- 2. Let's pray for all the members of this church to serve one another with unity.**