



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found, and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

EPHESIANS LESSON 1

Welcome to our study of the book of Ephesians, which was written about 13 years after Galatians. Ephesians is one of the most exciting books of the New Testament. It is an awesome "rags-to-riches" story, depicting the life and inheritance we have in Christ. We are just like Cinderella before we know Christ, dead in our trespasses and sins, but after we are "made alive" in Christ, we sit with Him in the Heavenly places (2:5). Ephesians gives us an amazing view of the Heavencies. This book has been called "The Queen of Epistles," "The Crown of Paul's Writings," and the "Grand Canyon of Scripture." It was John Calvin's favorite book, as well as many other theologians'. It has transformed the lives of many of its readers. Ephesians is also considered by some to be "the last will and testament" of Jesus Christ to those whom He calls His own.

Before we begin, let's take some time and look at some important facts about this book, which will help us get a better understanding of what Paul, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is saying to us today.

Who wrote it?

Paul is identified as the author twice in this Epistle (1:1, 3:1). He was about 65 years old at the time he wrote it and his authorship is widely accepted.

Date and History

The book of Ephesians is considered one of Paul's "prison epistles," along with Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon. All of Paul's letters are classified into one of two groups:

- (1) **Early:** written during the years of his missionary journeys
- (2) **Later:** written after Paul's arrest at Jerusalem (Acts 21)
(The prison epistles are considered "later" writings.)

Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon are thought to have been written at the same time, which was about AD 61. They were all written from a prison in Rome where Paul was on trial for his life. Paul had been thrown in jail before (2 Corinthians 11:23), but this was for a much longer duration. Paul sent these letters by way of two messengers; Onesimus and Tychicus. Onesimus was a runaway slave that met Paul in Rome and accepted Christ. Paul convinced him the right thing to do was to return to his master in Colossae, who was named Philemon. Tychicus was a pastor in Colossae who had come to Rome to discuss some issues with Paul. Onesimus and Tychicus took Paul's letters with them and delivered the letters to the churches in Ephesus and Colossae (Colossians 4:7-9 and Ephesians 6:21-22).

Ephesians and Colossians are considered "twin epistles" because they are so much alike. We will explore that further when we study Colossians.

The city of Ephesus

Ephesus was a Roman province of Asia and considered the "first" city because of its strategic location. Ephesus was one of the three leading international trade centers, having a very busy commercial port. It was a religious, political, and commercial center of the time, with a population of about 300,000 people. It was filled with philosophers, artists, poets, and many types of "orators." They were known for their large amphitheaters, gymnasiums, and massive public buildings. It was also the home of the great Temple of Diana (or Artemis), which was destroyed in the middle of the 4th century BC, taking about 200 years to gradually rebuild. This temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Diana was supposedly the daughter of Zeus and was known as the moon goddess and the patron of young girls. Many believed that the image of Diana fell directly from Heaven (Acts 19:35). Because many would come to worship at the temple, the city was filled with idolatry, superstition, magic, and other occultic practices. Much money was made on selling silver images of Diana to worship.

Paul visited Ephesus briefly while on his missionary journey (Acts 18:19-21). On his second visit he stayed for about three years (Acts 19:1-20, 31), teaching daily in the local lecture hall (Acts 19:9). Churches were most likely planted as a result of Paul's evangelistic outreach. Let's spend a minute in Ephesus, shall we?

1. Paul experienced a lot of opposition in Ephesus. Read Acts 19:1-41. What opposition did he face? (You probably need lots of space!)
2. Was there any fruit from this visit in Ephesus?
3. According to verse 25, what was Demetrius most concerned with?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 16:8-9. What else did Paul receive besides opposition?
5. In Acts 20:16-38, Paul calls the elders of Ephesus to meet him in Miletus, and shared his heart with them. Read these verses and list some key points of Paul's parting words. (Paul wrote this letter about 10 years after that visit.)

Who was Ephesians written to?

Traditionally, this epistle is thought to have been written to the church of Ephesus. Verses 4:17 and 6:21-22 refer to a specific church. Others think that it was written to many unspecified churches because some ancient manuscripts omit the phrase "at Ephesus." It also seems a little impersonal if he was writing to someone he was really close to. Some scholars simply combine the two views and say the epistle was written to the Ephesians, but with the purpose of also circulating it among the other churches in the neighborhood.

Purpose

The general purpose of Ephesians is to show us the relationship between Christ and His Church and to give us practical advice about growing in our relationship with Christ. Paul focuses on what God has done through the work of Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Spirit today. Chapters 1-3 are doctrinal, explaining the riches of God's grace. Chapters 4-6 look practically at our duty as recipients of that grace. This letter doesn't contain any controversy, warnings, or a defense of any particular doctrine. As Paul sat in prison, it seems like he got a glimpse of eternity and was inspired to share it with his friends. Sounds to me like he stepped into Heaven! The words "Heaven" and "Heavenlies" each appear four times in this book.

Ephesians is a source of encouragement to the believer, rather than a challenge. Ephesians explains what it means to be "in Christ" and what our duty is as a result. R. W. Dale has said, "The doctrinal teaching of this epistle is very little more than a development of the single expression, 'in Christ.'" John Stott mentions four points explored in this book: "The new life which God has given us in Christ (1:3-2:10); the new society which God has created through Christ (2:11-3:21); the new standards which God expects of His new society (4:1-5:21), especially unity and purity; and the new relationships into which God has brought us -- harmony in the home and hostility to the devil (5:22-6:24)." This ends our lesson for today. I hope the background of this city will help you understand the reason Paul is writing. Tomorrow we will begin reading this exciting book. Let's end with our memory verse for the week. See you later!

Memory Verse of the Week: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the Heavenly places in Christ." Ephesians 1:3

Second Day

Review your memory verse.

1. Let's begin today by reading the book of Ephesians in one sitting. After you read the chapter, give it a title and write a one sentence- summary explaining the main point of the chapter. Also note any key words or phrases you find.

Chapter 1:

Chapter 2:

Chapter 3:

Chapter 4:

Chapter 5:

Chapter 6:

2. What verse or verses would you pick as the key verse of the book?

3. As you read through the book, what verses or points most ministered to your heart?

That's all for today. I pray that you were encouraged as you read through Ephesians. Do you feel like you stepped into the Heavenlies?

Third Day

Spend time studying your verse. Meditate on what is meant by "every spiritual blessing."

1. Read Ephesians 1:1-23. Observe and list the facts you find. Are there any thoughts or doctrines that are new to you?
2. In this chapter, Paul describes the spiritual position of a believer. What is it?
3. How many times is the "will of God" mentioned in this chapter? Why is this significant?
4. How many times is the phrase "in Him" or "in Christ" mentioned?
5. What do we know about the Ephesian Christians? Read 1:15, 2:11, 3:13, and 4:1.

6. Read verses 1-6. Paul is bursting with praise for God. Why?

Verses 3-14 are often called Paul's "hymn of grace." He is celebrating the blessings he has received, and will receive, in Christ. He describes the Heavenly standing we receive once we are saved. Paul is writing to the "saints," which refers to a living believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. The word saint means holy one, or "separated or set apart." We are not saints on our own merit, but by an act of God. H. A. Ironside has said, "We do not become saints by saintliness, but we should be characterized by saintliness because we are saints." God has set us apart for Himself; to live a life of holiness.

In this section, Paul points out the role of the Trinity in our salvation. God the Father planned it (4-6), the Son paid for it (7-12), and the Holy Spirit applied it (13-14).

7. Explain God the Father's role in our salvation (4-6). Answer the following questions: When did He plan it? On what basis did He choose us? What were we chosen to be?

8. What does the phrase "accepted in the Beloved" mean? What does it mean to you personally?

This section has incredible meaning. When we are born again, we are born rich! We will share in the riches of God's grace! When we accept Christ, we are identified with Him, and therefore we inherit future blessings. We are also able to draw on His wealth today for our daily living. Ephesians 1:3 tells us that Jesus is seated in the Heavencies, and 2:6 tells us that we are seated with Him. We were written in Jesus' will, and then He died, enabling it to be enforced.

The fact that God chooses us is called the doctrine of election. This doctrine is a divine revelation, not a human speculation. It is often confusing and mysterious for some. We must remember that Paul was writing about election to encourage the believers, not confuse them. The fact that God chose them before the foundation of the world was supposed to lift their spirits and cause their souls to rejoice! As we talk about it further, don't be alarmed or allow yourself to become frustrated. Election is a beautiful truth taught in Scripture for our benefit.

Salvation begins with God, not with man. Although we think we are the ones who choose Christ, we would not have chosen Him if He had not first chosen us. (John 6:44, 15:16; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2, 1 Thessalonians 1:4-7; Romans 3:10-11.) Salvation is not based on anything we have done, but solely on His grace. We are chosen "unto" something, which is to be holy and without blame. Do we respond to God against our own will? Warren Wiersbe put it this way: "No, man responds because God's grace makes him willing to respond. The mystery of divine sovereignty and human responsibility will never be solved in this life. Both are taught in the Bible (John 6:37). Both are true, and both are essential." John Stott says, "Yes, you did choose, and freely, but only because in eternity God had first decided for you."

Verse 5 introduces us to the word "predestination," which means "to ordain beforehand, or to predetermine." This word usually refers to what God does for saved people. Scripture does not teach us that people are "predestined" to hell. Wiersbe believes that election refers to people, while predestination refers to purpose.

9. What were we predestined to be, according to verse 5?

10. Some believe that the doctrine of election encourages us to sin, using the argument that "if we are already chosen, why shouldn't we just live like we want?" Using these Scriptures, how would you challenge that argument?

11. We can tell by Paul's tone that he was excited that he was chosen by God. It's like he almost couldn't get over it. How about you? Are you excited that you were elected by God before the world began? He was thinking about you and me before we were born. Wow! Write a prayer or a song of praise, expressing your thankfulness to God for all He's done for you.

See you tomorrow. I rejoice every day that I have been "accepted into the Beloved." I hope you do too.

Fourth Day

Work on your memory verse. Are you appropriating the blessings He has for you today?

In our next section, Paul offers praises to the Son of God for His part in our salvation. Remember, God planned it, Jesus paid for it, the Holy Spirit applied it.

1. Read Ephesians 1:7-12. List the blessings we have "through the blood of Christ."

Remember the term "redemption" from our study in Galatians? The word means payment of a price or ransom. The price of our redemption was the blood of Christ, and the object of redemption was our souls. Jesus Christ bought the church back with His own blood (1 Peter 1:18-19; Hebrews 9:12; Mark 10:45). Through His blood we also receive forgiveness of sin. John Calvin said this: "God puts our sins out of His remembrance and drowns them in the depths of the sea, and, moreover, receives the payment that was offered Him in the person of His only Son."

2. Read and explain what each verse says about forgiveness:

- a. Psalm 103:12
- b. Isaiah 44:22
- c. Jeremiah 31:34b
- d. Micah 7:18-19
- e. Matthew 26:28
- f. 1 John 1:9

3. Because we are forgiven, what are we called to do? Read Matthew 6:14-15. Is it really possible to forgive those who have wronged us? Do we have to?

4. Is there someone in your life that you have "chosen" not to forgive? What should you do? (Is forgiveness a choice?)

5. Ephesians 1:9 refers to the "mystery of His will." What do you think Paul is referring to?

Verse 10 sounds complicated at first, but once we break it down, it's easier to understand. What Paul is saying is God will one day unite everything in Christ. Already Christ is the head of the church, but one day all things will acknowledge His headship. Right now there is disunity and discord in the universe, but one day, in the fullness of time, or at the appointed time, we will see the unity we all desire under the headship of Jesus Christ.

6. Read Ephesians 1:13-14. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in our salvation?

7. What is the significance of being "sealed" with the Holy Spirit? How is He a "seal," a "promise," and a "guarantee"?

8. Who is "the purchased possession"?

9. In light of this whole section, how do we become God's possession?

10. What is our responsibility in all this, according to verse 13?

In those days, the owner attached his seal to his possessions, announcing his ownership. We are owned by Him and are under His protection. The Holy Spirit also serves as a deposit guarantee of our inheritance. In the Greek and Roman culture, it was customary to make a deposit when purchasing something. It was a down payment that said more was coming. The Holy Spirit is the Father's guarantee that He will return

for us (Romans 8:18-23, 1 John 3:1-3). He will finish the work in us and bring us into glory.

The word guarantee can also be translated "earnest," which can also mean "engagement ring." When we ladies are given an engagement ring, what does it mean? It better mean that the groom is going to fulfill the promise he made to us when he asked us to marry him. The Holy Spirit is our engagement ring as we wait for the Lord to fulfill His promise to us.

11. How do you feel about being "God's possession"?

12. If you are a believer, you have been sealed with the Holy Spirit. Are you living like you belong to God? Do your actions live up to the standard of your Owner? Are you pursuing a life of holiness?

13. What is the purpose behind these gifts God has given us? Read verses 6, 12, and 14.

I pray that you are bringing God the glory He deserves. Is His glory evident by the way you live your life? Think about it ...

Fifth Day

Write your verse from memory.

Today we will take a final look at Ephesians chapter 1. Paul moves from singing his praises for God to praying that his friends would know the blessings they've received, as well as for spiritual wisdom. How do you pray for your friends?

1. Read Ephesians 1:15-23. What is Paul praying for?

Notice that Paul is not praying that they receive "more" blessings, but that they would know what they've already received.

2. John Stott said, "Growth in knowledge is indispensable to growth in holiness." Can you explain this statement? How do the two go together?
3. How do we receive the knowledge of God? What's our responsibility in the pursuit of knowing God?
4. What does Paul say about the power of God?
5. If the power of God raised Jesus from the dead, is there anything He can't do? How does that encourage you today?

6. Does Paul pray for material blessings? Why or why not?

7. How does our calling in Christ offer us hope?

In verse 18, the phrase "the glory of His inheritance in the saints" may either mean God's inheritance in us, or our inheritance in God. Scholars differ on this point. We know both statements are true. We are God's special treasure, and in Him we find our treasure.

Paul obviously doesn't think it's wrong to think about our Heavenly inheritance. It's something exciting to think about. We should anticipate it, be thankful for it, appreciate it, and appropriate it.

8. How should knowing and anticipating our inheritance affect how we live today?

9. Does it affect your life? (Do you understand what it means to inherit the riches of His grace?) Take some time and meditate on that fact. It should make your spirit soar!

10. How does Ephesians 1:20-23 relate to Philippians 2:9-11 and Colossians 1: 15-18?

11. We need to remember that Paul is writing this letter from prison. Does this sound like the voice of a man who is locked up? How could Paul rejoice and be so excited while going through this trial? (Do you think he was encouraged by his own words?)
12. What important lessons did Paul obviously learn in prison? Read Philippians 4:6-7, 11-13; 2 Corinthians 12:9-19 and 13:9.
13. How does Paul's attitude encourage you if you are in the middle of a trial? (Can you trust the Lord, knowing that He is sufficient for you?)

To close today, I want to point out that Paul uses the word "grace" twelve times in this letter. Lehman Strauss, in his commentary on Galatians and Ephesians, gives us a list of blessings that are ours because of grace:

1. salvation (Ephesians 2:8)
2. justification (Romans 3:24)
3. victory over sin (Romans 5:20)
4. power to testify (Romans 12:3, 15:15, Colossians 4:6)
5. strength for service (2 Timothy 2:1, Hebrews 12:28)
6. a spirit of generosity (2 Corinthians 8:7)
7. sweetness in singing (Colossians 3:16)
8. ability to stand (1 Peter 5:12)
9. strength in suffering (2 Corinthians 12:9)

That's it ladies. I pray that you will find many "Reasons to Rejoice" in the book of Ephesians. I already have! I pray that each of us will "know" the hope of His calling and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. Take some time and look up the Scriptures above on grace. You'll be glad you did. See you next week!

Ephesians at a Glance

FOCUS	THE POSITION OF THE CHRISTIAN				THE PRACTICE OF THE CHRISTIAN							
REFERENCE	1:1 — 1:15 — 2:1 — 3:14 — 4:1 — 4:17 — 5:22 — 6:10 — 6:24											
DIVISION	PRAISE FOR REDEMPTION	PRAYER FOR REVELATION	POSITION OF THE CHRISTIAN	PRAYER FOR REALIZATION	UNITY IN THE CHURCH	HOLINESS IN LIFE	RESPONSIBILITIES AT HOME AND WORK	CONDUCT IN THE CONFLICT				
TOPIC	BELIEF				BEHAVIOR							
	PRIVILEGES OF THE CHRISTIAN				RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHRISTIAN							
LOCATION	ROME											
TIME	A.D. 60-61											

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