

# **Introduction to the book of Ephesians (pray)**

## **Introduction**

I thought it would be prudent for me to do a book study with you through the Book of Ephesians.

I will continue in Mark after the Lockdown as we meet face to face.

This is an introductory sermon.

Our aim is to pursuing the authors intended meaning.

We want to know:

- The reason he wrote the book
- What he wrote
- What response he expected of his readers.

Discovering the authors intension means you discover God's intension.

The biblical way to do so is to study using the literal grammatical historical method.

- By literal I mean what the Author intended.
- By historical, I mean discovering the historical events through which God provides theology.

The historical background of each book is very important as it helps you discover the reasons (the why) Paul wrote a book, as well as the expected response required

By Grammar means that we focus on the language used: the words, the sentences, the paragraphs and their relationships to one another.

By Theology I mean a deeper understanding of who God is and His will.

## **Introductory comments about Ephesians**

Scholars in church history had great things to say about this book.

*In last decade of the fourth century the golden-mouthed Chrysostom of*

*Constantinople states in the preamble to his homilies on Ephesians that this letter is full of Paul's sublime thoughts and doctrines which he scarcely utters elsewhere but plainly declares here. John Calvin considered Ephesians as his favorite letter and he preached a series of forty-eight sermons on the book"*

*Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the great poet and philosopher, regarding Ephesians: "It is one of the divinest compositions of man. It embraces every doctrine of Christianity;—first, those doctrines peculiar to Christianity and then those precepts common to it with natural religion*

*Raymond E. Brown stated in 1997: "Among the Pauline writings only Rom can match Eph as a candidate for exercising the most influence on Christian thought and spirituality."*<sup>1</sup>

Having spent some time myself in this book, I found it a profoundly rich book, unveiling Gods overarching plan for the universe, in Christ through the gospel bringing about unity and harmony in the universe.

This book oozes the love of Christ, displays His authority and power, blazes forth the gospel, displaying Gods infinite wisdom through the church.

Its a book that takes the readers from human salvation, to reconciliation in His church, to conquering evil powers in the spiritual realm to worshipping God in His glory.

Its a book that not only informs your theology of God and the gospel, but also a practical book translating that theology in to practical ways to live out the gospel.

## **Some Historical background to Ephesus and the surrounding areas**

Ephesus was the most important and influential city in the province of Asia Minor.

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<sup>1</sup> Hoehner, H. W. (2002). [\*Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary\*](#) (pp. 1–2). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

It was the largest commercial center west of the Taurus mountains. (Modern day Turkey)

It had a natural harbor, whose wave used to wash up to the temple of Diana according to the Roman writer Pliny.

The temple dedicated to Diana was seen as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

Tradition taught:

- that Diana was born in the woods near Ephesus where her temple was built.
- that the Amazons founded the city and they worshipped Diana and Cybele (nature goddess)
- that one of her companions was called Lucifer (light bearer, the shining one)
- Diana had the title "Lucifera" (light bearer) connected with the moon.

When Ephesus was conquered by the Greeks, the Greeks named her Artemis.

Images of her often depict her as her upper body covered with breasts signifying her to be the mother of all life.

She is also described as the goddess of the moon but also often pictures as the huntress with two dogs beside her.

She impersonated the reproductive powers of men and animals and all other life.

She was the unattainable virgin goddess.

They believed:

- that Diana lived in nature and all offerings possible were acceptable to her resulting in much wealth pouring into the temple.
- That Diana had renounced the idea of marriage because she was appalled at the birth pains her mother suffered in bearing her.

The rituals of temple service included sacrifices and ceremonial prostitution practices.

The idol making business of shrines of Diana in Ephesus was a booming business.

*<sup>24</sup> For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. Acts 19:24*

Since the majority of people in Asia worshipped Diana, the demand was great.

*27 And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, **she whom all Asia and the world worship.**" Acts 19:27 (ESV)*

Many practiced the magic arts. (Acts 19:19)

In this idolatrous and demonic setting came the gospel.

It began with Apollos preaching Jesus from the Scriptures in the synagogue. (Acts 18:24-28) Priscilla and Aquilla mentored him and continued in ministry there.. Acts 18:24-28

The church was firmly established by Paul in Acts 19. Initially he preached for three months in the synagogue and then with resistance from the Jews spoke daily in the hall of Tyrannus for two years. (Acts 19:8-9)

*10 This continued for two years, so that **all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.** 11 And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and **the evil spirits came out of them.** Acts 19:10–12 (ESV)*

Soon after this we read about the Jewish exorcist, called the sons of Sceva failing to exorcise a demon and this story became known to everyone.

*13 Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims." 14 Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. 15 **But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?"** 16 And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, **mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked***

*and wounded.* <sup>17</sup> **And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks.** *And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled.* <sup>18</sup> *Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices.* <sup>19</sup> *And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all.* *And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver.* <sup>20</sup> **So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.** Acts 19:13–20 (ESV)

After having ministered there for more than 2 years, Paul was forced to leave due to a riot that started by Demetrius a silver smith who made shrines of Artemis.(Acts 19:24)

The gospel proclamation threatened the trade of idols as many people turned away from idolatry.

After Paul left, he sent Timothy who pastored the church for about a year and a half primarily to counter false teachers. (1 Tim 1:3-7)

It is interesting to note the content of their doctrines connect with the historical background information of worshipping Diana

*1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, 2 through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, 3 who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.* 1 Timothy 4:1–3 (ESV)

Recalling that Diana' traditionally renounced the idea of marriage, it appears that these demonical doctrines were being spread by some prominent men in the church.

Paul gave great attention to Marriage and its display of Christ's relationship to the church. (Eph 5:22-30)

Why did Paul write this book?

*<sup>9</sup> making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ <sup>10</sup> as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. Ephesians 1:9–10 (ESV)*

The overarching theme(purpose/reason) of the book is Gods eternal purpose to gather into one the whole created universe, to restore harmony between himself and them.

It's a vision of great oneness in Christ through the gospel as every creature both spiritual beings and human beings are brought into subjection (to unite) to Christ.

He did this through the gospel:

- Conquering and subjecting the evil power on the cross
- Saving the chosen unbelievers
- Reconciling the Jews with the Gentiles in Christ into a new body, the church

Paul teaches doctrine in ch 1-3 and duties(. How the doctrines translate into conduct) in ch 4-6

**We will focus on the first 2 verses of Ephesians this morning. Read them**

*<sup>1</sup> Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: <sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:1–2 (ESV)*

## **Proposition**

3 keys that help you to understand the authors intent in Ephesians so that you can better apply it in your life.

1. About the author
2. About the recipients
3. About their blessing

# 1. About the author

<sup>1</sup> Paul,

Some basic facts about Paul:

1. He was from the tribe of Benjamin and called Saul possibly named after Israel's first King Saul. He was born in Tarsus in Cilicia in Asia Minor
2. He was well trained in rabbinical studies under the famous Gamaliel (Acts 22:3)
3. Before his conversion Paul was an anti-Christians leader in Judaism's that pursued and persecuted them.
4. On the Road to Damascus Paul met Christ, and he was saved and became an apostle to the Gentiles for Jesus Christ.
5. As Paul writes He is in a Roman prison (Eph 4:1)
6. Soon after this letter Paul was released for a brief period, but would be imprisoned again and finally martyred under Nero +- 64Ad-67AD

That's in broad strokes something about Paul.

1. He is the author of the book.
  - His Greeting in 1:1 indicates this.
  - His statement in 3:1 I, Paul a prisoner of Christ Jesus indicates this.
  - The General character of the epistle indicates this, which is typical Paul like patterns, the greetings, thanksgivings.
  - The Style and language usage is typical of Pauls writings.
  - Paul himself refers Ephesus in several other passages Rom 16:5, 1 cor 15:32
  - Many of the church Fathers quoted from the Book and attributed the book to Paul like:
    - Clement of Rom 95AD quoted from Eph 4:6, 1:3-4, 5:21, 4:18
    - Ignatius 115AD showed numerous points of contact with the book.
    - Poly carps epistle shows close agreement with eph 5:25, 4:2, 6:13-17
    - Hermas speaks with knowledge 4:30 and many others even in the 2nd century quoted from it and connected it with the writings of Paul.

There is sufficient evidence to prove that Paul indeed was the writer of the Book which is important to know as there are some out there who claim otherwise.

The letter is dated between 60-62 AD, is called a prison epistle along with Philippians, Colossian and Philemon.

Paul was an apostle.

### ***Paul an apostle of Christ Jesus***

The term apostle was used in classical Greek referring to ships being sent out for cargo or military expeditions, sometimes used for an envoy or emissary.

So, this idea is found in the bible as an apostle means to be sent out, to be a messenger or an envoy of Christ.

The term apostle is used in three ways in the Scriptures:

1. Firstly, its used to refer to the 12 persons Jesus named apostles Mt 10:2-4. Acts describes what qualifies you an apostle. The office)

*<sup>21</sup> So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, <sup>22</sup> beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.” Acts 1:21–22 (ESV)*

- a) They must have been with Christ in his earthly ministry
- b) They must have witnessed his resurrection Body

2. It's used to refer to **apostles in addition** to the Twelve.

- a. **Barnabas** (Acts 14:4, 14; 1 Cor 9:5–7),

*<sup>14</sup> But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, ... Acts 14:14 (ESV)*

- b. **James, the Lord's brother** (1 Cor 15:7; Gal 1:19),

*<sup>19</sup> But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.*



Galatians 1:19 (ESV)

c. **Apollos (1 Cor 4:6, 9),**

<sup>6</sup> *I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers... 1 Corinthians 4:6 (ESV)*

<sup>9</sup> *For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. 1 Corinthians 4:9 (ESV)*

3. Thirdly it referred to Paul who was endowed with the gift of apostleship, even though he had not been with Jesus in his earthly ministry.

He did see Him in His resurrected body and was personally called, taught and sent by Christ.

He received his apostle through Christ.

<sup>5</sup> *through whom we have **received grace and apostleship** to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, Romans 1:5 (ESV)*

<sup>1</sup> *Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? 1 Corinthians 9:1 (ESV)*

Paul called himself the least of the apostles, and unworthy to be called it.

<sup>8</sup> *Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. <sup>9</sup> For I am **the least of the apostles**, unworthy to be called an apostle, **because I persecuted the church of God. 1 Corinthians 15:8–9 (ESV)***

#### **The apostolic duties involved:**

1. To **preach** the gospel 1 Corinthians 1:17 (ESV)

<sup>17</sup> *For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.*

1. **Teach and pray** (Acts 6:4)
2. To **work miracles**

*<sup>12</sup> The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works. 2 Corinthians 12:12 (ESV)*

3. To **appoint and build** up the leaders of the church

*<sup>23</sup> And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed. Acts 14:23 (ESV)*

4. To **lay the foundation** for the Church.

*<sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, Ephesians 2:19–20 (ESV)*

5. And **to write Gods word** (the Scriptures we have today)

As Paul refers to himself as an **apostle of** Christ Jesus.

This means that he was **commissioned Jesus** Christ, was invested with His **authority to** minister the gospel to the Gentiles.

It implies **ownership, authority and mission.**

- Not self-appointed, but God appointed.
- Not **his words**, but Christs words.

Many claim to be apostles in our modern-day time.

They simply do not meet the **biblical qualifications for the office** of an apostle.

The next phrase explains why this be the case.

***By the will of God.***

Paul's an apostle not because of **His natural birth**, not because of **his academic training, not because He claimed to be an apostle, but an apostle of Christ by the will** of God. Galatians expresses it well

*<sup>1</sup> Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— Galatians 1:1 (ESV)*

By the will of God is used in vs 5, 9, 11 and relates to **Gods saving plan.**

Paul, calling as an apostle to the Gentiles **fitted within Gods gracious divine plan** to bring even the **Gentile nation's under submission** to Christ.

The **initiative and commission** came from God, not from Man.

And it was to lay the foundations of the church.

This has been laid and so there is no need for that office currently

## Application

1. Many people these days may **claim** to be apostles.
2. But it is only those who were **specifically commissioned by Christ**, who had **witnessed the resurrected Christ**, who were **attested by Miracles**, who laid the **foundations for the church** who have the **biblical right to be called an apostle** (capital A). Since the foundations have been laid, there is no further need for this office.
3. Be warned that those who claim to be apostles today **are not by the will** of God.

## 2. About the recipients

*To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus*

The term saints can also be **translated "holy"** or the **holy ones** of God. This was the common greeting for believers, which finds its original roots in the Old Testament description of Israel.

*<sup>6</sup> and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel." Exodus 19:6 (ESV)*

Israel was the chosen nation of God set apart to be holy nation for God.

IN the NT the idea referred to those chosen by God to be holy, but broadened to include both Jew and Gentile believers.

To the Holy ones and faithful (those who trust in another, those who believe in Christ.)

In other words, the saints (holy ones) are that because they are faithful(they trust/believe in in Christ)

To those chosen by God to be holy and are that positionally because they believed and continue to believe in Christ Jesus

In Christ meaning in union with Christ.

They're not in Christ because of their faithful service, but because of what Jesus did for them.

**An application you can take from this, is this:**

- If you want to be holy in Gods eyes, you need to have been chosen by God.
- You know you are chosen by God if you believe in Christ and are in union with Christ.
- You and I are not responsible for Gods work in our hearts.
- Sinner, God commands you even this morning to repent and believe(trust).
- Acknowledge your inability to save yourself and ask God for the grace to repent and trust upon Jesus death and resurrection for the forgiveness of your sin.

### ***To the saints who are in Ephesus***

The geographical location is given to us as in Ephesus.

Unfortunately, there is uncertainty about this phrase

Some of the oldest authoritative manuscripts leave out the phrase "in Ephesus".

The tone and the lack of personal details in the letter seem to argue against it being a letter addressed specifically only to the church at Ephesus.

Various scholars try to argue that it was in the original, but in they are not 100% convincing in their arguments 100%.

I lean agree with the Pillar commentators that Ephesians was a general epistle (circular letter) sent to **Gentile believers** in south western Asia. That it was linked with the church at Ephesus at an early stage, which was a strategic church, from whom this letter was distributed to the other churches in the area.

From reading the background in Acts 19, the problems addressed in the book permeated not only Ephesus but also the surrounding churches in south western Asia.

Issues like:

- Issues on marriage
- Disunity between the Jews and Gentiles
- Magic and demonic activity was common occurrences in that area.
- The topics in the book of Ephesians address many of these issues.

### **3. About their blessing**

*<sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:2 (ESV)*

Grace refers to God's kindness towards those undeserving of His favour, but who have trusted in Jesus.

Peace is the equivalent of the Hebrew shalom, which signifies wholeness or completeness.

Grace would be like the fountain and peace the stream that flows from it. (MacArthur)

Because you have experienced Grace from God you have peace with God.

The typical Jewish greeting was Mercy and peace

*<sup>2</sup> May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. Jude 2 (ESV)*

Grace and peace is distinctly Christian in nature.

Grace is essential the gospel in one word.

Paul wanted the Saints to appreciate and accept God's undeserved Grace.

Grace is the cause, Gods gracious work through Christ death and resurrection and peace is the effect of Gods word as believers in Christ are reconciled with an infinitely Holy and infinitely loving and infinitely angry God.

The source of this grace and peace is defined originating both from God our father and the Lord Jesu Christ.

Note that its not only **from the Father**, but **our** father which implies a relationship between Father and son.

You come into a relationship of peace with God, through His Grace as manifested in the gospel.

The sources of Grace and peace are from both the Father and the son.

The Lord meaning the one having authority and power.

IN summary the greeting covers:

- the authorship of Paul, who is an apostle of Jesus through the will of God,
- the recipients called the saints (the holy ones), because they believe in Jesus
- and expressed desire that they appreciate the blessing: the grace that results in peace form God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**What should we take away this morning.**

1. If you want to be Holy?
2. If you want peace with God?
3. If you want a relationship with God so as to call Him our Father?
4. then there is one answer.
5. You need His grace, you need to believe in Jesus

Do you.

The book of Ephesus is all about being in unity with Christ and living out that reality practically.

Its about embracing the gospel, submitting to Jesus and living out in a Christ like manner.

This is in perfect harmony with the over arching reason Paul wrote the letter.

That Gods plan for the fullness of time is to unite all things in Him.

This happens as you place your trust, your confidence in what God accomplished in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

There is one more application I want you to get.

In the situation of lockdown, it is so easy to become despondent and self-focused.

I want you to contemplate this truth this week.

Paul was in prison, isolated, no TV, no internet, all he had was paper and pen.

And from prison we see him focusing on others, writing the most profound, theologically deep letters to encourage believers.

I you are down , may I encourage you to contact another believer, phone them, whatap call and simply encourage them in Christ, and see how that encouragement your heart and bring you peace.

## **In Conclusion**

3 keys that help you to understand the authors intent in Ephesians so that you can better apply it in your life.

About the author Paul

About the recipients the holy ones who believe in Christ

About their blessing Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ