

Ephesians

Ephesians apparently was written by Paul from Rome in about 62 AD as he awaited trial before Nero. It was sent to Asia along with Colossians and Philemon.

Notice the blessings in Christ in heavenly places (1:3, 2:6), the churches role in making known God's will in heavenly places (3:10), and the ongoing battle against spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places (6:12) which Christians participate in. What is seen in this world is only part of what is real and what affects us for better or worse, definitely for better in Christ.

God's eternal plan and purpose for us is noted in 1:4-5.

Jesus is "the Beloved" in 1:6 (see also Matthew 3:17, 17:5) through whom we have been redeemed (purchased and set free).

God's abundance towards us is emphasized in 1:8, 18-19, and context, and prayed for more and more in 3:14-21.

Paul prayerfully connected the Spirit God gives with wisdom and revealed knowledge and comprehension in our hearts in 1:17-18.

Note the motivators, faith, hope, and love in 1:15, 18.

The central gospel theme of the resurrection of Jesus is highlighted in 1:20, with Christ's supremacy over all stated in paeans of praise toward the Lord in 1:20-23.

Christians have been transformed from the walking dead to genuine life in Christ, 2:1-10, being raised up not just to live in this world but to be seated with Christ in heavenly places, a prelude to eternal glory with him. 2:7-10 ought not to be explained away. We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus, not our own doing, but God's gift. There is no other answer or solution to the sin problem except God's gift (remember Romans 3:23, 6:23). Having new life, being a new creation in Jesus, we can do what pleases the Lord, created unto good works (2:10, Romans 8).

A core theme of 2:11-22 is the unity of Christians, whether from the Jews or from the nations (gentiles) in Christ, in the cross of Christ, and the ongoing work of the Spirit who brings us into fellowship with one Father and one Temple in which he dwells.

The foundation of the apostles and prophets in 2:20 is going to be linked in 4:11, as also the one new man in 2:15 is directly linked to the perfect/mature man Christians collectively aspire to become in 4:13.

The idea of the dividing wall in 2:14 is directly related to Paul's experience in Acts 21:28 where he was accused of bringing a gentile beyond the wall of partition where only Jews could approach God's temple, on pain of death.

Ephesians 3:1-13 continues the theme of unity in Christ, particularly engaging the large percentage of Gentiles in the Ephesian church, that God's mystery (note the assertion of divine authority, not merely human reasoning in 3:3) was particularly bound up with preaching freedom in Christ to the nations, and not just to Jewish people. God has one people that encompasses folks from anywhere, any heritage, who come together in Christ. The division of the nations, and God giving them up (Babel, Genesis 11, with Deuteronomy 32, and Romans 1:18ff) ended in Christ.

Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21 is as valid for Christians today as it was then. We need the strength of the Spirit at work within us, Christ in our hearts by faith, and comprehension of the magnificence of God's great love.

Ephesians 4-6 follows a 5 topic outline similar to Colossians 3-4.

1) Walk worthy of the Lord, 4:1-21. This calls for using the grace given to us by Christ to help each other, encourage one another, and to live upright moral lives that glorify the Lord.

Note the things not to do in 4:25-32 are all supplanted by things to do.

Note the contrast between a mind altered by chemicals (as happens in many religions and personal philosophies) and a mind altered by the Spirit in 5:18.

Note that Christians singing together/to each other make melody in their "heart to the Lord" (5:19), that is, to Jesus (4:4-6, 5:20, 5:22-23. Generally speaking in Ephesians, and in all of Paul's letters, we should understand "Lord" to be referring to Jesus Christ, unless there is a contextual reason to

conclude otherwise.

2) Husbands and wives, loving and submitting in 5:22-33. It isn't popular to call on Christian women to submit to and respect their husbands but the Lord designed marriage that way intentionally. It's probably even less popular in practice for husbands to love their wives as their own body and lay down their lives for their wives, but again, that's what the Lord has designed us for and called us to.

3) Parents and children, parents guiding in the light of the Lord and children obeying, 6:1-4.

4). Servants/slaves and Masters, 6:5-9, which still applies to working conditions today, employers and employees, doing good work, not being abusive, etc.

5) Taking a stand against the devil and the forces of darkness, 6:10-20, which includes the equipping provided by God and prayers and evangelism.

Tychicus is named as the letter carrier, as also in Colossians. Apparently he was a coworker, and evangelist like Timothy and Titus and Apollos, who would carry personal news and also encourage the church when he visited.

The closing benediction again is a call for what only God can provide in Jesus, then or now.