



Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

Map of Ephesus



The Prison Epistles

- A quartet of men left Rome in the year A.D. 62, bound for the province of Asia, bearing four of the most sublime compositions of the Christian faith. Each was given an epistle to bear to his particular constituency.
- These four letters are designated the “prison epistles of Paul,” since he wrote them while imprisoned in Rome.
 - Tychicus from Ephesus (Ephesians 6:21) had the Epistle to the Ephesians.
 - Epaphroditus from Philippi (Philippians 4:18) had the Epistle to the Philippians.
 - Epaphras from Colosse (Colossians 4:12) had the Epistle to the Colossians.
 - Onesimus (Philemon’s slave) from Colosse (Philemon 10) had the Epistle to Philemon.

Historical Background

- Ephesus was a city on the western shore of what is now modern day Turkey. It was originally built by the Greeks as a part of a trade route. In 133 B.C., Ephesus came under direct control of the Romans. During the first century A.D., the city was the capital of the Roman province of Asia
- It was famous for its trade, art, and science, but it was even more renowned for its Temple of Diana (Greek *Artemis*), which was considered one of the seven wonders of the world and, who was widely worshipped.

Temple of Goddess Artemis Diana



- Sacrifices to this goddess would bring fertility and “good sex”
- Prostitution was rampant in Ephesians as a result;
- Many would come to Ephesus all over the world to worship Artemis and buy idols of her, which the Ephesians made.

Historical Background (cont)

- St. Paul and St. John the Beloved lived in Asia Minor (Anatolia) in the last decades of the first century and from Ephesus had guided the Churches of that province. After Domitian's death the Apostle returned to Ephesus during the reign of Trajan, and at Ephesus he died about at 100 A.D.
- Ephesus was one of the seven cities addressed in Revelation (2:1–7), indicating that the church at Ephesus was still strong.
- Two decades later, the church at Ephesus there was still important enough to be addressed by a letter written by Bishop Ignatius of Antioch to the Ephesians in the early 2nd century AD. The church at Ephesus had given their support for Ignatius, who was taken to Rome for execution.

Historical Background (cont)

- The house of the Virgin Mary (Turkish: *Meryem Ana*, meaning "Mother Mary"), is believed to have been the last home of Mary, mother of Jesus. It is a popular place of pilgrimage which has been visited by three recent popes.
- The Church of Mary is close to the harbor of Ephesus was the setting for the Third Ecumenical Council in 431 AD, which resulted in the condemnation of Nestorius.
- A Second Council of Ephesus was held in 449, but its controversial acts were never approved by the Catholics. It came to be called the Robber Council of Ephesus or Robber Synod of Latrocinium by its opponents.
- Ephesus in the years to come became a major Christian center, possibly the center of Christianity in the early second century. In the fifth century a large Basilica (church building) was erected in Ephesus and named after the Apostle John.

Paul & the Ephesians

- Paul first visited Ephesus on the way home from his second missionary journey and came back on his third missionary journey
- Conversion of Apollos by Priscilla and Aquilla
- Paul returns to Ephesus in A.D. 54
- 12 Disciples were baptized & received the H.S.
- Paul preached in the synagogue for three months, and when strong opposition to his teaching arises, he withdraws with the other Christians to the school of Tyrannus
- Luke tells us that Paul preached in the Hall of Tyrannus for 2 years, and that all of Asia heard the Word of the Lord during that period. It is about this time period that Paul writes the Epistle 1 Corinthians to the church in Corinth.

Paul & the Ephesians (cont)

- Paul was so successful there that the idol makers were losing lots of money, which could have threatened the entire economy of Ephesus.
- As a result there was a lot of hostility against Christians, lead by a man known as Demetrius, who made idols.
- Paul decided to return through Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica, Beroea) and Achaia (Athens and Corinth) and journey on to Jerusalem. He sent Timothy and Erastus on to Macedonia in advance of his journey
- Demetrius, a silversmith in Ephesus stirred up a riot against Paul for damaging his silver idol business and dragged his disciples to the great theatre.

Paul & the Ephesians (cont)

- Acts 20:1-2 informs us that at that point Paul left Ephesus for Macedonia.
- Timothy was with Paul in Ephesus on the third preaching journey but was sent to Macedonia just prior to the disturbance over the goddess Diana
- After Paul's release from his first Roman imprisonment, he left Timothy at Ephesus.
- While in Ephesus, Timothy received the epistles known to us as First Timothy and Second Timothy.
- Paul and the Ephesian Elders (Acts 20:17-39)

Purpose of Writing this Epistle

- Paul wrote the letter to encourage the personal faith of the Christians. It gives teaching, prayers and great praises to God. His letter was one of joyous praise for God's eternal purpose
- This letter is different from other letters by Paul. The main differences are:
 - he does not give any special greetings;
 - he does not send a message to any one particular person;
 - he does not talk about special problems.

Purpose of Writing this Epistle

6 PROBLEMS IN THE EPHESIAN CHURCH

HOPE

Didn't feel anticipation of going to heaven

RICHES

Lacked confidence in the forgiveness of sins

POWER

Had trouble overcoming their sinfulness

UNITY

There were ethnic conflicts

SINS OF THE FLESH

Behaving like the rest of the society

ROLE IN RELATIONSHIPS

Had improper attitudes about the roles that God had assigned to them in the society

Important Sections

- In chapters 1-3, Paul shows that the church was foreordained by God, that it has been redeemed, and that Jew and Gentile have been made one in Christ.
- Paul shows the need for being made a new creation by reviewing the believer's past history before he became saved.
- Chapters 4-6 enumerates the duties of the Christian & embarks upon the practical application of the truth stated in the first three chapters.
- **Two great truths stand out in this part of the epistle: the believer's *walk*, and the believer's *warfare*.**

Believer's Walk

A) The Christian Is to Walk Characteristically - “I entreat you to live your life worthy of the call you have received

- **The Christian Walk Preserves Unity (4:1-6)**
 - Humility
 - Meekness
 - Longsuffering
 - Forbearing one another in love
 - All of these virtues contribute toward keeping “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”

Believer's Walk (cont)

- The Christian Walk Promotes Usefulness (4:7-16)
 - “Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ”
 - The purpose of the gifts is “for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (4:12)
 - Special gifts were bestowed to equip the saints to do the service, and the intent of this service is the building up of the body of Christ. Each gift is a contribution to the whole body.
 - Our blessed Lord gave these gifts that each of His followers should serve Him, and that service must continue as long as the Church remains on the earth.

Believer's Walk (cont)

B) The Christian Is to Walk Carefully

- **Walk in wisdom** - “understanding what the will of the Lord is.”
- **Giving of thanks always** for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”
- **The Spirit-filled Christian is submissive**
 - **The Husband-Wife Relationship (5:22-33)**
 - Not only that women should submit to their husbands but that husbands should love their wives.
 - The subjection of a wife to her husband is “*as unto the Lord*”
 - “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it” (5:25)
 - The Christian husband who bears the image of Christ will be like his Lord in the exercise of sacrificial love.
 - No Christian wife can dispute the ruling place in the home when her husband displays such love.

Believer's Walk (cont)

■ The Parent/Child Relationship (6:1-4)

- Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right” (6:1). The command to children is to obedience. To obey means to submit to, or to comply with, a command.
- The command to obey is followed by that to honour: “Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth”.
- To honour means *to esteem with deference or respect*.
- To those children who obey this command He assures prosperity, good health, and length of days.
- Parents: “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (6:4).
- Parents must guard against treating them harshly; must rule the home well under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, so that even when discipline are necessary, it will be with a loving desire for the welfare of the children.
- Parents are to give their children Christian education and point the child to what the Bible teaches about conduct

Believer's Warfare

C) The Christian Is to War Courageously (6:10-21)

- The Equipment (6:14-20)
 - Girdle of Truth
 - Breastplate of Righteousness
 - Shoes
 - Shield of Faith
 - Helmet of Salvation
 - Sword of the Spirit
 - Prayer

Conclusion

- The work that went on in Ephesus was magnificent. The Christians there made up a great church.
- But, in spite of this, Paul and later the Apostle John (Revelation) had warned Ephesians to maintain their fervour and devotion in serving God.
- The city of Ephesus now lies in ruins and there is no church meeting there. As sad as this is, we are encouraged by the words of the Lord in Revelation 2:7: “To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” Consequently, we know that those who obeyed the gospel in Ephesus and remained faithful make up a group (i.e., the church) that will live eternally in heaven.