

Ephesians

Theme: The Glory of Christ in the Church

Author: The Apostle Paul (1:1; 3:1)

Courier: Tychicus (6:21)

Destination and Recipients: Church at Ephesus
(located in Asia Minor, modern Turkey)

Date of Writing: c. A.D. 60 – 63

Place of Writing: Rome (Paul's first Roman imprisonment)

Main Divisions:

1. The Believer's Position (chs. 1 – 3)
2. The Believer's Practice (chs. 4 – 6)

Key Thought: "In Christ" (27 times in Ephesians)

Most Familiar Text: Eph. 2:8-10

Founding of the Church: Paul's third missionary journey
(Acts 18:23 – 21:17; esp. 19:1-41)
Paul spent two years in Ephesus (19:10) because of
its strategic importance

Introduction to Ephesians

I. Prison Epistles

Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon comprise the Prison (or Captivity) Epistles of Paul. They are grouped together because they were penned while Paul was in prison. Each of these letters makes reference to Paul's imprisonment (Eph. 3:1; Phil. 1:7, 13; Col. 4:3, 18; Philemon 10, 13). Two major questions are associated with these books:

- a. Where were they written?
- b. Can we determine in what order they were written?

II. Place of Composition

- a. There are two clear imprisonments of Paul in the NT which are of some length: (1) in Caesarea under the governorships of Felix and Festus (Acts 23-26) and (2) in Rome while Paul awaited trial before Caesar Nero (Acts 28).
- b. Armed with a very small amount of early church tradition, some have conjectured yet another imprisonment in Ephesus during Paul's extended ministry there. This position is weak with virtually no NT support.
- c. The traditional view assigns all the Prison Epistles to the two-year Roman imprisonment recorded in Acts 28 (approximately A.D. 60-63). This would be Paul's first Roman imprisonment when he was under house arrest. This confinement is not the same as the one noted in 2 Timothy, where Paul is in a dungeon awaiting his execution.

Conclusion: Though the Ephesians and Caesarean possibilities should at least be kept in mind as possibilities for the Prison Epistles, Rome is the better view when all the evidence is considered.

III. Order of Composition

- a. Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon were written around the same time. Ephesians and Colossians have been called "twin epistles" because of their similar content, while Colossians and Philemon have been tabbed "sister epistles" because of their common

destination/recipients. Both Ephesians and Colossians are carried to their destinations by Tychicus (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7). Furthermore, Tychicus is accompanied by Onesimus (Col. 4:9), the slave who is returning to Philemon. Apparently these three letters were delivered by the same group of individuals.

- b. Philippians was probably written after the other three Prison Epistles during the latter part of Paul's first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28:30-31), because the verdict of his trial seems more imminent.

IV. Authorship

The Pauline authorship of Ephesians is clearly affirmed in the text (1:1; 3:1) and unanimously supported by the early church. Yet the book is rarely accepted in non-Evangelical circles today.

- a. Arguments against Pauline authorship:
 - 1. Vocabulary and Style—Almost 100 words and phrases in Ephesians are not found elsewhere in Paul. The style of Ephesians is said to be more complex and cumbersome than Paul's usual lively presentation.
 - 2. Dependence—The alleged dependence of Ephesians on the other Pauline letters (Colossians in particular) is taken as an indication that the writer was not Paul himself, but one who freely appropriated Paul's material. The similarities between Colossians and Ephesians are greater than that of any other two Pauline writings. Approximately one-third of the words in Colossians are repeated in Ephesians. Parallels are numerous.
 - 3. Doctrinal Discrepancies—It is argued that doctrinal differences between Ephesians and the accepted Pauline writings are so great as to render common authorship unlikely. The theology of this epistle is thought to be more advanced than the theology of the apostle as gleaned from his accepted works. For instance, in Ephesians the Church is universal and not local as it often is in Paul's other epistles.

Based on arguments such as these, many scholars reject the Pauline authorship of Ephesians. One theory suggests that the book was written as an introduction to Paul's writings by one of his disciples or admirers.

- b. Response to the arguments against Pauline authorship:
1. Vocabulary and style—The fact that Paul resorts to a number of new words and expressions in this epistle is not without precedent or unusual. He is dealing with issues not previously covered, and new subject matter requires different vocabulary. Furthermore, the stylistic differences between Ephesians and other Pauline letters may be indicative of different circumstances. Paul was not facing the problems of a particular church; consequently, he could afford to be more reflective. That Ephesians was intended to be a circular letter to other cities in the region is very likely and must be taken into account.
 2. Dependence—The evidence is insufficient to demonstrate that the same author cannot be responsible for both Ephesians and Colossians. This argument has little merit.
 3. Doctrinal Discrepancies—While Ephesians may differ from other Pauline works in theological emphasis, its teachings do not contradict these books. Ephesians is simply complementary to other letters of Paul.
- c. Arguments for Pauline authorship:
1. Internal Evidence—Ephesians clearly claims to be written by Paul (1:1; 3:1).
 2. External Evidence—The Pauline authorship of Ephesians was universally accepted in the early Church.
 3. Literary Nature—The structure of Ephesians is in concert with the rest of Paul's correspondence.
 4. Theological Consistency—While Ephesians contains distinctive theological insights, it also contains common Pauline themes (e.g., God's gracious sovereignty, the centrality of Christ's work of reconciliation on the cross, the distinctive ministry of the Holy Spirit).

Conclusion: Overwhelming external evidence, the possibility of Ephesians being a circular letter, and the overall consistent internal data argues for Paul as the author of Ephesians, the date of writing being during his first Roman imprisonment around A.D. 60-63. His primary

theme is the glory of Christ and His church. Our life in Christ brings position and privileges individually and corporately.

V. Destination—To whom was the letter addressed?

- a. The phrase “in Ephesus” (1:1) is omitted from some of the oldest Greek manuscripts (e.g., Sinaiticus, Vaticanus).
- b. The letter does not appear to be addressing a particular situation. For instance, personal greetings, which are often found in Paul’s letters, are conspicuously absent.
- c. It is possible (probable) that Ephesians is a circular letter addressed to various churches in Asia Minor in the general vicinity of Ephesus. The circular address of the epistle explains the omission of a city name in the address. During Paul’s stay in Ephesus (the bulk of his third missionary journey recorded in Acts 18:23–21:17), the impact of his ministry was felt beyond the boundaries of the city of Ephesus. Consequently, it would be quite natural for him to write the Christian communities established during the Ephesian mission.

VI. Purpose

- a. In Ephesians, Paul reflects primarily on two major themes:
 1. Christ—Christ is the exalted Lord of the church and the whole creation. This is related to the work of the Spirit who continues the earthly ministry of Christ. The Spirit is mentioned 13 times in 6 chapters.
 2. Church—Ephesians addresses at length the privileges and responsibilities of believers in the Christian community.
- b. Unlike many of the other Pauline epistles, Ephesians does not address specific problems in a particular church. Indeed, this letter addresses a church experiencing remarkable peace and unity.
- c. “This document in large measure sums up the leading themes of the Pauline letters, and sets forth the cosmic implications of Paul’s ministry as apostle to the Gentiles” (F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*). Jew and Gentile are now one new people of God with all barriers being broken down. In the body of Christ there is no respect (prejudice) of persons. Ephesians, therefore,

contains a timely message of our day as well when sexual, racial, social, and cultural biases are still present. In Christ there is an equity of position and privileges!

EPHESIANS

The Glory of Christ in the Church

1:1-2 Introduction	KNOW 1:18		REMEMBER 2:11		DO NOT LOSE HEART 3:13		WALK WORTHY 4:1			PUT ON 6:11	
	Christian Blessings		Christian Salvation		Christian Family		Christian Conduct			Christian Armor	
	1:3-14 A Doxology	1:15-23 Prayer for Wisdom	2:1-10 Personal Salvation	2:11-22 Corporate Salvation	3:1-14 Mystery of the Church	3:14-21 Prayer for Knowledge	4:1-16 Mission of the Church	4:17-5:20 My Personal Walk	5:21-6:9 Domestic Responsibility	6:10-20 Spiritual Battle	6:21-24 Conclusion
Our Position in Christ						Therefore			Our Practice in Christ		
➔											
“I pray that you may know your resources in Christ”						“I pray that you may live consistent with your faith in Christ”					
WE ARE IN CHRIST						CHRIST IS IN US					
THE WORK OF GOD						THE WALK OF THE CHRISTIAN					
Heavenly blessings						Earthly walk					

“The Mission of the Church”

Ephesians 4:1-16

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| I. | <u>The church is to be characterized by unity</u> | 4:1-6 |
| | 1. There must be genuine humility (behavior) | 4:1-3 |
| | 2. There is sound theology (belief) | 4:4-6 |
| II. | <u>The church is to be characterized by diversity</u> | 4:7-11 |
| | 1. Appreciate our giving Savior | 4:7-10 |
| | 2. Acknowledge His gifted servants | 4:11 |
| III. | <u>The church is to be characterized by ministry</u> | 4:12-14 |
| | 1. Be equipped | 4:12 |
| | 2. Be edified | 4:12 |
| | 3. Be educated | 4:13 |
| | 4. Be enlarged | 4:13 |
| | 5. Be established | 4:14 |
| IV. | <u>The church is to be characterized by maturity</u> | 4:15-16 |
| | 1. Be mature in your speech | 4:15 |
| | 2. Be mature in your service | 4:16 |
| | 3. Be mature in your sensitivity | 4:16 |