

14. Ephesians

A. Authorship

Paul is identified as the author (1:1; 3:1).

B. Recipients

1) The City of Ephesus

Ephesus was the capital of Asia, a leading commercial center, population 250,000. Noted for its worship of Artemis (the Latin form of Diana), one of the seven wonders of the world. Artemis was a goddess worshiped as the one responsible for good crops, business, health, family, etc. See Acts 19:23-41 for the importance of Artemis to the Ephesian citizens.

2) The Church at Ephesus

- a. While we don't know how Christianity first came to Ephesus, Paul had visited it for a few days at the end of his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19-21). Aquila and Priscilla stayed there and helped Apollos (Acts 18:24-28).
- b. During his **third** missionary journey Paul returned to Ephesus and "found some disciples" (19:1). He not only helped the church gain firm footing in his three year ministry there (20:31), but was also influential in the spread of the gospel throughout the whole region (19:10, 26)

C. Occasion and Purpose

- 1) There is no evidence in this letter of anything going on in the church that occasioned Paul's writing. This makes identifying the exact occasion and purpose of Ephesians challenging.
- 2) Paul wrote this letter (as well as Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon) as a prisoner (3:1; 4:1; 6:20). This was his first imprisonment at **Rome** (Acts 28:16ff).

D. Characteristics

- 1) There are three lines of truth in Ephesians—
 - a. The believer's **position** in Christ, 1:3-14; 2:1-10
 - b. The **Body** of Christ, 2:11-3:13
 - This is the main subject of this letter—the universal church of Christ
 - Ephesians tells about the *organism* of the body of Christ, the universal church; it doesn't tell about the *organization* of the local church

- Any and every attempt to try to find the doctrine of the church in the OT is vain—it’s not there. While the OT prophets did anticipate the salvation of Gentiles, they did not anticipate Jews and Gentiles having **equal** standing in one spiritual body, the body of Christ, the church.
- The church is called a mystery. This doesn’t refer to a “whodunit” kind of thing; instead, *mystery* here refers to **truth previously hidden but now presently revealed**.
- The church is unlike any other spiritual entity that ever existed—it is not Israel nor the coming kingdom, though it will have a role in the kingdom and Christians are citizens of the kingdom.
- See Appendix K, “The Church” for more information on this doctrine

c. The believer’s **life** in Christ, 4:1-6:24

2) Classic passages

- a. The purpose of God in salvation, 1:3-14
- b. The lost condition of the unsaved, 2:1-3
- c. Salvation by grace alone, 2:4-10
- d. The church as a mystery, 3:1-12
- e. The love relationship between Christ and the church, 5:22-33
- f. The spiritual armor of the Christian, 6:10-18

E. Keys

- 1) Theme – The glory of God in the **Church**
- 2) Word – **grace**
- 3) Verse – **3:21**

F. Outline

As is the case with most of Paul’s letters, the doctrinal section is followed by a practical section. The two necessarily go together. Doctrine is essential to life, and life is the necessary result of doctrine.

Here’s a basic outline of Ephesians—

- 1) The **Doctrine** of the Church, 1-3
- 2) The **Duty** of the Church, 4-6

Here's a more detailed outline of Ephesians —

Introduction, 1:1-2

1. The Doctrine of the Church, 1:3-3:21

- 1) The Glory of God in the Salvation of the Church, 1:3-14
 - a. The Father's work, 1:3-6
 - b. The Son's work, 1:7-12
 - c. The Spirit's work, 1:13-14
- 2) Thanksgiving and Prayer to God, 1:15-23
 - a. Thanksgiving to God, 1:15-16
 - b. Prayer for Enlightenment, 1:17-23
- 3) The Glory of God and the Formation of the Church, 2:1-22
 - a. Regeneration of the Spiritually Dead, 2:1-10
 - b. Reconciliation of Jew and Gentile in One Body, 2:11-22
- 4) The Glory of God and the Revelation of the Church, 3:1-21
 - a. Revealed through Paul, 3:1-13
 - b. Response of Praise, 3:14-21

2. The Duty of the Church, 4:1-6:20

- 1) The Church must be Unified, 4:1-16
 - a. Necessity of Unity Exhorted, 4:1-6
 - b. Means of Unity Provided for, 4:7-16
- 2) The Church must be Holy, 4:17-6:9
 - a. A life of Purity, 4:17-5:2
 - b. A life of Love, 5:2
 - c. A life of Light, 5:3-14
 - d. A life of the Spirit, 5:15-21
 - e. A life of Submissiveness in Personal Relationships, 5:21-6:9
- 3) The Church Must Fight, 6:10-20

God is glorified by believers standing firm against the forces of evil. Such forces would destroy the unity of the church, godly living, and its ability to glorify God.

Conclusion, 6:21-24

15. Philippians

A. Authorship

Paul is identified as the author (1:1; cf. 3:4-6).

B. Recipients

- 1) Philippi was an important city (Acts 16:12). Many of its citizens were veterans of the Roman army. Latin was spoken as well as Greek, and they dressed like Romans. They obviously prided themselves on being Roman **citizens**. It's Jewish population was very small, as they didn't have enough men to form a synagogue (at least ten male heads of households were needed).
- 2) The Philippian church was founded on Paul's **second** missionary journey (Acts 16:12-40). Paul went to Macedonia, where Philippi is located, in response to what is called the Macedonian vision (Acts 16:9-12). Converts included Lydia (16:14-15), a demon-possessed girl (16:16-18), and the Philippian jailer (16:30-34).
- 3) Paul kept in close contact with the Philippian church, and they had twice sent gifts to him (Phil 4:14-16). During his third missionary journey he undoubtedly stopped at Philippi (Acts 20:1), and he swung through again at the end of his journey on his way to Jerusalem (Acts 20:3-6).

C. Occasion and Purpose

- 1) Express **thanksgiving** for their generous gift (1:5; 4:10-20). The Philippian church resumed supporting Paul financially, and so Paul wrote to thank them for their gift—an inspired “thank-you note.”
- 2) Epaphroditus. Sent by the Philippians to help Paul (2:25), he became very sick and almost died. When the Philippians heard this, they were very concerned, and so Paul wrote to tell them that he got better.
- 3) Update on Paul's situation (1:12-26). The Philippians were praying for him (1:19) and were concerned about him.
 - a. It would have been easy to see how Paul's imprisonment would have been troubling to the Philippians—“the spread of the gospel has stopped!”
 - b. However, these events actually resulted in the furtherance, rather than the hindrance, of the gospel (1:12)
 - c. This enabled the wide spread of the gospel – while constantly chained to a soldier (1:16, 20) and as soldiers were relieved of their duty, Paul would speak the gospel to them and they would hear his ministry to those who came to visit him (cf. Acts 28:16-31)
 - d. Furthermore, there were those who were preaching the gospel so that it would make things harder for Paul (1:15-18). Note that while the **content** of their preaching was

right, their *motives* were wrong. No approval is given to this, but thanksgiving is given that the gospel is spreading.

- 4) Warning about false teachers (chapter 3).
- 5) Exhortation to stand firm and be **united** (1:27-28; 4:2-5).

Thus, Philippians was not written because of a crisis in the Philippian church. It is rather a letter of love, inspired by **friendship**.

D. Characteristics

- 1) Philippians is a very personal letter, with over 100 uses of “I,” “me,” and “my.” This wasn’t pride, but evidence of a very close, personal relationship that he had with this body of believers.
- 2) A strong emphasis on the word “**gospel**,” used 9 different times (1:5, 7, 12, 16, 27a, 27b; 2:22; 4:3; 4:15).
- 3) Philippians also has the reputation of being the epistle of **joy**. Different forms of “joy” and “rejoice” are found at least 12 times in the book (1:4, 18, 25; 2:2, 17, 18, 28, 29; 3:1; 4:1, 4, 10)—“rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!” (4:4)
- 4) This letter has no OT quotations!
- 5) The Doctrine of Christ, Philippians 2:6-8
 - a. This is one of the greatest passages about the doctrine of Christ, but we must not forget *why* it was given—to illustrate the humility and obedience we as Christians should show toward one another (2:3-4).
 - b. Christ not only existed in the form of God (having all the attributes of God) but also lived in glory, in a way appropriate of God
 - c. Instead of keeping a greedy grasp on this equality with God, He gave it up freely
 - d. He humbled himself, not by setting aside His divine attributes, but willingly humbling himself by setting aside the enjoyment of his divine glory by becoming a man
 - e. He who was Lord of all took the position of a servant, like other men
 - f. More than this, his obedience was even to the point of death, the shameful death of the cross

E. Keys

- 1) Theme – A Christian Letter of **Friendship** and **Exhortation**
- 2) Word/“Mood” – **Joy**
- 3) Verse – **1:27**

F. Outline

Here's a basic outline of Philippians—

- 1) Praise, Appeals, and Plans, 1-2
- 2) Warnings, Exhortations, and Thanksgivings, 3-4

Here's a more detailed outline of Philippians—

Greeting, 1:1-2

1. Prayer of Thanksgiving, 1:3-11

2. The Spread of the Gospel, 1:12-26

- 1) Praise for the Spread of the Gospel, 1:12-20
 - a. His imprisonment has furthered the gospel, 1:12-14
 - b. His response to gospel preaching from wrong motivation, 1:15-20
- 2) Prayer for Life, 1:21-26

3. Practical Appeals, 1:27-2:18

- 1) Be Steadfast, 1:27-30
- 2) Be Unified and Humble, 2:1-11
- 3) Be Persevering, 2:12-13
- 4) Be a Good Testimony, 2:14-18

4. Plans, 2:19-30

- 1) Plans for Timothy, 2:19-24
- 2) Plans for Epaphroditus, 2:25-30

5. Warning Against Errors, 3:1-4:1

- 1) Warning against Legalism, 3:1-16
- 2) Warning against False Brethren (Antinomianism), 3:17-4:1

6. Exhortations and Thanksgiving, 4:2-21

- 1) Exhortations, 4:2-9
 - a. Be Unified, 4:2-3
 - b. Be Gentle and Prayerful, 4:5-7
 - c. Be Holy, 4:8-9
- 2) Thanksgiving, 4:10-21

Conclusion, 4:21-23