“By Gospel Grace, We... BE!”
The Letter to the Ephesians
June 26, 2016

INTRO: VIDEO - “BRIDGE Baptisms”

...Our BRIDGE family is growing :-) In many ways, today really is family-day... We’re going to see the Bible’s blueprint for family!

PREVIEW: Context... Content... Conclusion...

CONTEXT

b. Acts 1:8 = Promise, Purpose, Plan
c. Apostle Paul:
   i. Acts 8 Scoundrel
   ii. Acts 9 Saint
   iii. Acts 10+ Sent-one
      1. 3 Missions
         a. Passion
         b. Power
         c. Perseverance
      2. Investor: Inform... Inspect... Inspire
d. Church @ Ephesus
   i. Biblically:
      1. Originally God denied Paul’s access...
      2. **Founded at end of 2\textsuperscript{nd} missionary trip**
      3. Pricilla & Aquila were key, early leaders 
      4. **Most blessed of all biblical people:**
         a. Paul founded & pastored 3 years 
         b. Timothy pastored soon after 
         c. John leads in years 90-94...
         d. Paul writes this letter to them...
         e. Paul writes to Timothy there 
         f. John pens a Gospel/3 letters there 
         g. Revelation 2-3 written to “them”
   ii. BRIDGE connections:
      1. Ephesians is 1\textsuperscript{st} book ever preached 
      2. “Ephesians Fitness Plan” series 
      3. My concern/connection to Revelation 2 
      4. “Discipled Warriors” our biblical blueprint 

**T/S:** So what’s the theological thrust and practical purpose for this letter to the Ephesians?

Why has the Lord included Ephesians in His Word?

**BIG IDEA:** Ephesians is a Christian-family (a.k.a. “the Church”) manifesto... It’s like a family portrait that speaks & describes itself :-)
T/S: God had Paul write it from prison in Rome as an ongoing INVESTMENT in:
- Ephesian church family
- Regional church families in Asia
- Our church family...
- True church families past, present, future

CONTENT:

- Ephesians is 1 manifesto with 2 halves...
- Paul used *agape* 19X
- Ephesians begins & ends with love
- Chapters 1-3 = BLESSING
  - Beliefs: “What we believe…”
  - Doctrine: What’s our doctrine?
  - Privileges
  - Explain...
  - “Who” are we?

***NO imperatives in ch.1-3***

- Chapters 4-6 = BE-ing
  - Behaviors: “How we behave…”
  - Duty: What’s our duty?
  - Responsibilities
  - Expect...
  - “How” do we live?

***35 imperatives in ch.4-6***
Two key verses, one from each half...

**Ephesians 1:3 (ESV)**

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

**Ephesians 4:1 (ESV)**

1 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,

### I. Christian-family BLESSING:

#### A. GRACE

**i. 1:1-2**

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**ii. 1:3-14**

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for
adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of his grace…

1. God the Father chooses us (vv.3-6)
2. God the Son redeems us (vv.7-12)
3. God the Spirit seals us (vv.13-14)

UNITY “in Him” is theme/thread of book
- Doctrine of Election is evidence of grace!
- “In-Christ” (or equivalent)
  - 35X throughout Ephesians
  - More than any other NT book

The word riches is used 5X in this letter; grace is used 12X; glory 8X;

B. GLORY – 1:15-23 (this is a prayer of praise)

I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might...
C. GOSPEL

i. 2:1-3

1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins  
2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—
3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

ii. 2:4-10

4 BUT GOD, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,  
5 even when we were dead in our sins, made us alive together with Christ—

by grace you have been saved...

VIDEO: “Meet Bill Hise”

D. Globally-GATHERED

i. 2:11-22

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.....
18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.
ii. 3:1-6

6 This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

E. GIFTs

i. 3:7-13

7 Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace, which was given me by the working of his power. 8 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unspeakable riches of Christ.

ii. 3:14-19 (prayer for accepting/applying gifts)

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.
“Every heavenly gift...” (1:3) **UNITY!**

- Adoption; Redemption; Inheritance; Life; Power; Grace; Citizenship; & the Love of Christ

*** 3:20-21 = transitional benediction ***

20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

**VIDEO:** “Welcome Faces of Church”

**II. Christian-Family **BE-ING**:

a. **BE UNIFIED** (supernaturally) 4:1-6

1 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 zealously protecting the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
b. **BE EQUIPPED** 4:11-16

11 And *he gave* the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith & of the knowledge of the Son of God, to...

the fullness of Christ...

i. Apostles - thumbs
ii. Prophets - index finger
iii. Evangelists - middle finger
iv. Shepherds - ring finger
v. Teachers - pinky

c. **BE DIFFERENT** (“aroma”) 4:17-24

17 ...you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. 18 They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart… 24 put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

d. **BE CHRIST-LIKE** 4:25-32

29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may *give grace* to those who hear. 30 And do not
grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

e. BE AMBASSADORS (“imitators”) 5:1-14
1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.
2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

5 For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

VIDEO: Dustin-“Not Enough”

11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.
f. **BE SHREWD** 5:15-20

15 Look carefully then **how you walk**, not as **unwise** but as **wise**, 16 **making the BEST use of the time**, because the days are evil. 17 **Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.**

---

g. **BE SUBMISSIVE** 5:21

15 Look carefully then **how you walk**)... 21 **submitting to one another** out of reverence for Christ.

---

h. **BE BIBLICAL (relationally)** 5:22-6:9

   i. Wives to husbands 5:22-24
      **Submit & Respect**
   ii. Husbands to wives 5:25-32
      **Love & Sacrifice**
   iii. Children to parents 6:1-3
      **Obey & Honor**
   iv. Parents to children 6:4
      **Discipline & Instruct**
   v. Servants to masters 6:5-8
      **Obey Right-heartedly**
   vi. Masters to servants 6:9
      **Lead Right-heartedly**
Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

i. Belt of Truth
ii. Breastplate of Righteousness
iii. Cleats of Peace
iv. Helmet of Salvation
v. Shield of Faith
vi. Sword of the Spirit
vii. Prayer in the Spirit
viii. STAND!

T/S: Before the letter comes to a close...

See the inspirational love and compassion in the Church... Christ’s faith family... in 6:21-22
j. **BE INCORRUPTABLE!** 6:23-24

23 Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 **Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.**

**VIDEO:** Platt - “Risk It ALL”

**CONCLUSION:**

*(Ephesians is OUR family portrait/manifesto)*

*An inspirational reminder from yesterday...*

Pastor Jeff,

I pray that any attempts by the enemy to try and distract and discourage you would be defeated by your continued faith. I pray that the Father would provide a close group of believers that would help you by giving encouragement and accountability so that your walk with Christ would continue to grow stronger.

*Remember 1 Peter 5:9 -- "Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings."*
I leave you with our FAMILY SNAP-SHOT...

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

9 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:8-19

Let’s

Pray & PRAISE

(as a family)

VIDEO: “The Church”

BRIDGE Worship Team:

- Amazing Grace (Rising Sun)
- Born Again
OUR churches come in all styles and shapes—secret meetings in homes; wide-open gatherings in amphitheaters; worship services packing thousands into a sanctuary while an overflow crowd watches on closed-circuit television; handfuls who kneel in urban storefronts. Buildings will vary, but the church is not confined to four walls. The church of Jesus Christ is people, his people, of every race and nation, who love Christ and are committed to serving him. The "church age" began at Pentecost (Acts 2). Born in Jerusalem, the church spread rapidly through the ministry of the apostles and the early believers. Fanned by persecution, the gospel flame then spread to other cities and nations. On three courageous journeys, Paul and his associates established local assemblies in scores of Gentile cities.

One of the most prominent of those churches was at Ephesus. It was established in A.D. 53 on Paul's homeward journey to Jerusalem. But Paul returned a year later, on his third missionary trip, and stayed there for three years, preaching and teaching with great effectiveness (Acts 19:1-20). At another time, Paul met with the Ephesian elders, and he sent Timothy to serve as their leader (1 Timothy 1:3). Just a few years later, Paul was sent as a prisoner to Rome. There, he was visited by messengers from various churches, including Tychicus of Ephesus. Paul wrote this letter to the church and sent it with Tychicus. Not written to counteract heresy or to confront any specific problem,
Ephesians is a letter of encouragement. In it Paul describes the nature and appearance of the church, and he challenges believers to function as the living body of Christ on earth.

After a warm greeting (1:1, 2), Paul affirms the nature of the church—the glorious fact that believers in Christ have been showered with God's kindness (1:3-8), chosen for greatness (1:9-12), marked with the Holy Spirit (1:13, 14), filled with the Spirit's power (1:15-23), freed from sin's curse and bondage (2:1-10), and brought near to God (2:11-18). As part of God's "house," we stand with the prophets, apostles, Jews, Gentiles, and Christ himself (2:19-3:13). Then, as though overcome with emotion by remembering all that God has done, Paul challenges the Ephesians to live close to Christ, and he breaks into spontaneous praise (3:14-21).

Paul then turns his attention to the implications of being in the body of Christ, the church. Believers should have unity in their commitment to Christ and their use of spiritual gifts (4:1-16). They should have the highest moral standards (4:17-6:9). For the individual, this means rejecting pagan practices (4:17-5:20), and for the family, this means mutual submission and love (5:21-6:9).

Paul then reminds believers that the church is in a constant battle with the forces of darkness and that they should use every spiritual weapon at their disposal (6:10-17). He concludes by asking for their prayers, commissioning Tychicus, and giving a benediction (6:18-24).

As you read this masterful description of the church, thank God for the diversity and unity in his family, pray for your brothers
and sisters across the world, and draw close to those in your local church.

**Vital Statistics**

**Purpose:**

To strengthen the believers in Ephesus in their Christian faith by explaining the nature and purpose of the church, the body of Christ

**Author:** Paul

**Original Audience:**

The church at Ephesus, then circulated to neighboring local churches

**Date Written:**

Approximately A.D. 60, from Rome, during Paul's imprisonment there

**Setting:**

The letter was not written to confront any heresy or problem in the churches. It was sent with Tychicus to strengthen and encourage the churches in the area. Paul had spent over three years with the Ephesian church. As a result, he was very close to them. Paul met with the elders of the Ephesian church at Miletus (Acts 20:17-38)—a meeting that was filled with great sadness because he was leaving them for what he thought would be the last time. Because the letter contains no specific references to people or problems in the Ephesian church and because the
words "in Ephesus" (1:1) are not present in some early manuscripts, Paul may have intended this to be a circular letter to be read to all the churches in the area.

Key Verses:

"For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father, who is over all and in all and living through all" (4:4-6).

Key People: Paul, Tychicus

The Blueprint

1. Unity in Christ (1:1-3:21)
2. Unity in the body of Christ (4:1-6:24)

In this letter, Paul explains the wonderful things that we have received through Christ and refers to the church as a body to illustrate unity of purpose and show how each individual member is a part that must work together with all the other parts. In our own life, we should work to eradicate all backbiting, gossip, criticism, jealousy, anger, and bitterness, because these are barriers to unity in the church.
| **Purpose** | directs, carries out, and sustains our salvation. | in him, his purpose becomes our mission. Have you committed yourself to fulfilling God's purpose? |
| **Christ the Center** | Christ is exalted as the center of the universe and the focus of history. He is the head of the body, the church. He is the Creator and sustainer of all creation. | Because Christ is central to everything, his power must be central in us. Begin by placing all your priorities under his control. |
| **Living Church** | Paul describes the nature of the church. The church, under Christ's control, is a living body, a family, a dwelling. God gives believers special abilities by his Holy Spirit to build the church. | We are part of Christ's body, and we must live in vital union with him. Our conduct must be consistent with this living relationship. Use your God-given abilities to equip believers for service. Fulfill your role in the living church. |
| **New Family** | Because God through Christ paid our penalty for sin and forgave us, we have been reconciled—brought near to him. We are one family in Christ, so there should be no barriers, no divisions, no basis for discrimination. We all |
are a new society, a new family. Being united with Christ means we are to treat one another as family members. belong to him, so we should live in harmony with one another.

Paul encourages all Christians to wise, dynamic Christian living, for with privileges goes family responsibility. As a new community, we are to live by Christ's new standards. God provides his Holy Spirit to enable us to live his way. To utilize the Spirit's power, we must lay aside our evil desires and draw on the power of his new life. Submit your will to Christ, and seek to love others.

-Christian Conduct-

- Life Application Study Bible.

Date

Because Paul mentions his imprisonment (3:1; 4:1; 6:20), this letter should be dated to c. A.D. 62 when Paul was held in Rome (Acts 28). Critics who date Ephesians later in the first century do so from doubts about Paul’s authorship rather than from strong evidence against the earlier date.
Theme

There are two main themes of Ephesians: (1) Christ has reconciled all creation to himself and to God, and (2) Christ has united people from all nations to himself and to one another in his church. These great deeds were accomplished through the powerful, sovereign, and free working of the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and are recognized and received by faith alone through his grace. In light of these great truths, Christians are to lead lives that are a fitting tribute of gratitude to their great Lord.

Purpose, Occasion, and Background

There was no specific occasion or problem that inspired this letter, though Paul does mention that he desired the Ephesians to know how he was faring in confinement (6:21-22). Ephesians articulates general instruction in the truths of the cosmic redemptive work of God in Christ; the unity of the church among diverse peoples; and proper conduct in the church, the home, and the world. Unity and love in the bond of peace mark the work of the Savior as well as Christians’ grateful response to his free grace in their lives.

Ancient Ephesus forms an appropriate background to the book of Ephesians because of this city’s fascination with magic and the occult (see Acts 19:19, and below). This helps explain Paul’s emphasis on the power of God over all heavenly authorities and on Christ’s triumphant ascension as head over the church and over all things in this age and the next. The Ephesians needed to be reminded of these things in order to remain resolute in their
allegiance to Christ as the supreme power in the world and in their lives.

**Literary Features**

Ephesians exemplifies the genre of the NT epistle, with its salutation (including sender, recipients, and greeting), thanksgiving, exposition, exhortation, and closing (including final greetings and benediction). The main argument of the letter is punctuated by several prayers and an interior benediction (3:20-21) that marks the transition from doctrinal affirmations to practical exhortations. **Chapter 2** takes the form of a spiritual biography, in which Paul recounts the saving work of Christ in the life of every Christian, and especially in the lives of Gentiles who are now included in the one new people of God. In **chapter 3** the apostle takes an autobiographical turn as he testifies about his calling to the Gentiles and his prayers for the Ephesian church. The *paraenesis* (series of moral exhortations) consists mainly of instructions for household conduct, both for the church as the household of faith and for individual believers in their domestic relationships. The famous description of the complete armor in the last chapter is an extended metaphor. Paul also catalogs the blessings of salvation in a lofty and exhilarating lyrical style.

Ephesians finds its central unity in the work of Jesus Christ and in the community of people (both Jews and Gentiles) who are corporately united in him. The strong opening statement of praise and the absence of any theological polemics make Ephesians pervasively positive in tone. The clear division of the
epistle into two halves of nearly equal length (namely, the doctrinal section in chs. 1-3 and the practical section in chs. 4-6) also provides a strong sense of structural unity.

The Setting of Ephesians  (c. A.D. 62)

Ephesus was a wealthy port city in the Roman province of Asia. It was a center of learning and was positioned near several key land routes in western Asia Minor. Paul probably wrote his letter to the Ephesians while under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28).

Outline

1. Introduction (1:1-14)
   1. Greetings (1:1-2)
   2. Spiritual blessings in Christ (1:3-14)
2. Paul’s Prayer of Thanksgiving (1:15-23)
3. Salvation by Grace through Faith (2:1-10)
   1. Hopelessness and helplessness without Christ (2:1-3)
   2. Hope in Christ (2:4-10)
4. Unity and Peace of Christ (2:11-22)
   1. Unity of Christ’s people (2:11-15)
   2. Peace with God (2:16-18)
   3. Implications of Christ’s peace (2:19-22)
   1. Paul’s apostolic ministry (3:1-7)
   2. The mystery and wisdom (3:8-13)
6. Paul’s Prayer for Strength and Insight (3:14-21)
7. Unity of the Body of Christ (4:1-16)
   1. Exhortation to unity (4:1-6)
   2. The different gifts (4:7-10)
   3. The gifts for edification of the church (4:11-16)
8. Paul’s Testimony (4:17-24)
9. Exhortation to an Edifying Lifestyle (4:25-32)
   1. Exhortation to self-sacrificial love (5:1-2)
   2. Instruction in holy living (5:3-20)
11. Submission to One Another (5:21-6:9)
   1. Submission in general (5:21)
   2. Wives and husbands (5:22-33)
   3. Children and parents (6:1-4)
   4. Slaves and masters (6:5-9)
12. The Whole Armor of God (6:10-20)
   1. The Lord’s strength (6:10-13)
   2. Standing firm (6:14-17)
   3. Being constant in prayer (6:18-20)
13. Conclusion (6:21-24)

- ESV Study Bible

Introduction

Paul's letter to the Ephesians is an anthem to the sovereign grace of God displayed toward sinners in Christ. It contains some of the worst news ("you were dead in your trespasses and sins") and best news ("but God... made us alive with the Messiah") in all of Scripture. In view of this grace, Paul calls believers to "walk worthy of the calling" we have received.
Circumstances of Writing

Author: Paul referred to himself by name as the author of the book of Ephesians in two places (1:1; 3:1). Many regard this book as the crown of all of Paul's writings. Today some scholars think the book contains a writing style, vocabulary, and even some teachings that are not typical of the apostle. We can conclude, in line with the undisputable acceptance of Pauline authorship in the early church, that there is no reason to dispute the Pauline authorship of Ephesians.

Background: Paul penned the letter while in prison (3:1; 4:1; 6:20). Disagreement exists concerning whether Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea (Ac 24:22) around A.D. 57-59 or in Rome (Ac 28:30) in about 60-62 when he wrote this letter. Paul most likely wrote Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians during the same imprisonment. Tradition suggests that Paul wrote the letter from Rome around 60-61, which would have transpired while Paul was under house arrest in guarded rental quarters (Ac 28:30).

Relatively little is known about the recipients of the letter called Ephesians. Some important and early manuscripts do not contain the words "at Ephesus" (1:1). The letter was carried to its destination by Tychicus, who in Ephesians 6:21 and Colossians 4:7 is identified as Paul's emissary. The Ephesian and Colossian letters probably were delivered at the same time since in both letters the apostle noted that Tychicus would inform the churches concerning Paul's situation.
We can suggest the following possible scenario. While Paul was imprisoned in Rome, the need arose to respond to new religious philosophies influencing the Asia Minor area. The impetus to write the letters came to Paul from Epaphras, who informed him of the threats to Christianity in the Lycus Valley. In response, Paul wrote a letter to the church at Colossae. About the same time (either shortly before or shortly thereafter), he penned a more expansive and general letter intended for churches in Asia Minor, including Laodicea (see Col 4:16) and Ephesus.

**Message and Purpose**

The book hints at several purposes. The apostle taught that Jewish and Gentile believers are one in Christ. This oneness was to be demonstrated by their love one for another. Paul used the noun or verb form of love (agape) 19 times (about one-sixth of the total uses in all the Pauline letters). Ephesians begins with love (1:4-6) and ends with love (6:23-24).

Paul implicitly addressed matters raised by the mystery religions in the Lycus Valley. The letter has much to say about redemption (1:7) and the divine intention for the human race (1:3-14). Additional themes include grace (1:2), predestination (1:4-5), reconciliation, and union with Christ (2:1-21).

Central to the message of Ephesians is the re-creation of the human family according to God's original intention for it. The new creation destroys the misguided view that God accepts the Jew and rejects the Gentile. Paul says the distinction was abolished at Christ's sacrificial death. Thus no
more hindrance remains to reuniting all humanity as the people of God, with Christ as the head (1:22-23).

The new body, the church, has been endowed by the power of the Holy Spirit to enable them to live out their new lives (1:3-2:10) and put into practice the new standards (4:1-6:9).

In sum, we can say that the overall emphasis of Ephesians is on the unity of the church in Christ, through the power of the Spirit.

**Contribution to the Bible**

The letter to the Ephesians was probably a circular letter, with Ephesus being the primary church addressed.

Paul stayed at Ephesus, the capital city of the province of Asia, for almost three years (see Ac 20:31). The fact that it was a circular letter helps explain the absence of personal names of Ephesian believers. From its inception Paul intended for the letter to gain a wider audience than that which would be found in Ephesus alone. After the Ephesians read it, the letter would have been routed to Colossae, Laodicea, and other churches in the area.

Known to be a letter of the apostle Paul, the letter was readily accepted as Scripture by the recipients.
Structure

The salutation and structure of Ephesians are quite similar to Colossians. Many topics are commonly treated in both letters.

The message is strikingly similar. Of the 155 verses in Ephesians, over half contain identical expressions with those in Colossians.

Colossians, however, is abrupt, argumentative, and seemingly compressed. Ephesians presents a bigger, finished picture that is meditative, instructive, and expansive.

Though Ephesians and Colossians contain many similarities, it is important to observe the distinctives of Ephesians.

When the content of Ephesians that is common to Colossians is removed, there remain at least seven units of material unique to Ephesians:

- 1:3-14 An expanded benediction
- 2:1-10 A confessional statement on the new life
- 3:14-21 A prayer to understand the mystery of Christ
- 4:1-16 An extended exhortation to Christian unity
- 5:8-14 A section on walking in the light
- 5:23-32 A theological expansion on the household roles
- 6:10-17 A unique picture of the Christian's spiritual warfare
Outline

I. Introduction (1:1-14)
   A. Greetings (1:1-2)
   B. God's purposes in Christ (1:3-14)
II. Paul's Prayer of Thanksgiving (1:15-23)
III. Salvation by Grace through Faith (2:1-10)
IV. Unity of God's New People (2:11-22)
V. Revelation of the Divine Mystery (3:1-13)
VI. Paul's Prayer for Strength and Love (3:14-21)
VII. Unity of the Body of Christ (4:1-16)
   A. Exhortation to unity (4:1-6)
   B. The variety of gifts (4:7-10)
   C. The maturity of the church (4:11-16)
VIII. Exhortations to Holy Living (4:17-5:21)
IX. New Relationships (5:22-6:9)
   A. Wives and husbands (5:22-33)
   B. Children and parents (6:1-4)
   C. Slaves and masters (6:5-9)
X. Warfare of the New People (6:10-20)
XI. Conclusion (6:21-24)

- HCSB Study Bible.

Background and Setting

It is likely that the gospel was first brought to Ephesus by Priscilla and Aquila, an exceptionally gifted couple (see Acts 18:26) who were left there by Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:18, 19).
Located at the mouth of the Cayster River, on the east side of the Aegean Sea, the city of Ephesus was perhaps best known for its magnificent temple of Artemis, or Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was also an important political, educational, and commercial center, ranking with Alexandria in Egypt and Antioch of Pisidia in southern Asia Minor.

The fledgling church begun by Priscilla and Aquila was later firmly established by Paul on his third missionary journey (Acts 19) and was pastored by him for some three years.

After Paul left, Timothy pastored the congregation for perhaps a year and a half, primarily to counter the false teaching of a few influential men (such as Hymenaeus and Alexander), who were probably elders in the congregation there (1 Tim. 1:3, 20).

Because of those men, the church at Ephesus was plagued by “fables and endless genealogies” (1 Tim. 1:4) and by such ascetic and unscriptural ideas as the forbidding of marriage and abstaining from certain foods (1 Tim. 4:3). Although those false teachers did not rightly understand Scripture, they propounded their ungodly interpretations with confidence (1 Tim. 1:7), which produced in the church harmful “disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith” (1 Tim. 1:4).

Thirty years or so later, Christ gave to the apostle John a letter for this church, indicating its people had left their first love for Him (Rev. 2:1-7).
Historical and Theological Themes

The first three chapters are theological, emphasizing NT doctrine, whereas the last three chapters are practical and focus on Christian behavior.

Perhaps, above all, this is a letter of encouragement and admonition, written to remind believers of their immeasurable blessings in Jesus Christ; and not only to be thankful for those blessings, but also to live in a manner worthy of them.

Despite, and partly even because of, a Christian’s great blessings in Jesus Christ, he is sure to be tempted by Satan to self-satisfaction and complacency. It was for that reason that, in the last chapter, Paul reminds believers of the full and sufficient spiritual armor supplied to them through God’s Word and by His Spirit (6:10-17) and of their need for vigilant and persistent prayer (6:18).

A key theme of the letter is the mystery (meaning a heretofore unrevealed truth) of the church, which is “that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel” (3:6), a truth completely hidden from the OT saints (cf. 3:5, 9).
All believers in Jesus Christ, the Messiah, are equal before the Lord as His children and as citizens of His eternal kingdom, a marvelous truth that only believers of this present age possess.

Paul also speaks of the mystery of the church as the bride of Christ (5:32; cf. Rev. 21:9).

A major truth emphasized is that of the church as Christ’s present spiritual, earthly body, also a distinct and formerly unrevealed truth about God’s people.

This metaphor depicts the church, not as an organization, but as a living organism composed of mutually related and interdependent parts.

Christ is head of the body and the Holy Spirit is its lifeblood.

The body functions through the faithful use of its members’ various spiritual gifts, sovereignly and uniquely bestowed by the Holy Spirit on each believer.

Other major themes include

- the riches and fullness of blessing to believers. Paul writes of “the riches of His [God’s] grace” (1:7),
- “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (3:8), and
- “the riches of His glory” (3:16).
- He admonishes believers to “be filled with all the fullness of God” (3:19),
- to “come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man,
- to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (4:13), and
- to “be filled with the Spirit” (5:18).
- Their riches in Christ are based on His grace (1:2, 6, 7; 2:7),
- His peace (1:2),
- His will (1:5),
- His pleasure and purpose (1:9),
- His glory (1:12, 14),
- His calling and inheritance (1:18),
- His power and strength (1:19; 6:10),
- His love (2:4),
- His workmanship (2:10),
- His Holy Spirit (3:16),
- His offering and sacrifice (5:2), and
- His armor (6:11, 13).

The word **riches** is used 5X in this letter; **grace** is used 12X; **glory** 8X; **fullness** or **filled** 6X; and the key phrase “**in Christ**” (or “**in Him**”) some 12X.

Interpretive Challenges
The general theology of Ephesians is direct, unambiguous, and presents no ideas or interpretations whose meanings are seriously contended. There are, however, some texts that require careful thought to rightly interpret, namely: (1) 2:8, in which one must decide if the salvation or the faith is the gift; (2) 4:5, in which the type of baptism must be discerned; and (3) 4:8, in its relationship to Psalm 68:18.

### Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Verses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>Salutation (1:1, 2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>God’s Purpose for the Church (1:3-3:13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>Predestination in Christ (1:3-6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>Redemption in Christ (1:7-10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>Inheritance in Christ (1:11-14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.</td>
<td>Resources in Christ (1:15-23)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.</td>
<td>New Life in Christ (2:1-10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F.</td>
<td>Unity in Christ (2:11-3:13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>God’s Fullness for the Church (3:14-21)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>God’s Plan for Faithful Living in the Church (4:1-6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>God’s Son Endows and Builds the Church (4:7-16)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td>God’s Pattern and Principles for Members of the Church (4:17-32)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.</td>
<td>God’s Standards for Faithfulness in the Church (5:1-21)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>Walking in Love (5:1-7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>Living in Light (5:8-14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>Walking in Wisdom and Sobriety (5:15-18a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.</td>
<td>Filled with God’s Spirit (5:18b-21)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII.</td>
<td>God’s Standards for Authority and Submission in the Church (5:22-6:9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>Husbands and Wives (5:22-33)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DATE AND OCCASION

The imprisonment mentioned in 3:1 and 6:20 is the same as that referred to in Col. 4:3, 10, 18, and is probably Paul's two-year house arrest in Rome (a.d. 60-62) recounted in Acts 28.

**DATE AND OCCASION**

The imprisonment mentioned in 3:1 and 6:20 is the same as that referred to in Col. 4:3, 10, 18, and is probably Paul's two-year house arrest in Rome (a.d. 60-62) recounted in Acts 28.

**DATE AND OCCASION**

Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of Asia on the west coast of Asia Minor. It lay between the eastern and western halves of the Roman Empire and was among the top five cities of the empire in the first century. It was important to the spread of Christianity.

During Paul's unusually long stay in Ephesus, it became the center for evangelizing the western part of Asia Minor (Acts 19:10).
Paul's affectionate ties with this church are revealed in his farewell speech to its elders (Acts 20:16-38).

Ephesus' most prominent civic monument was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the temple of the goddess Diana. In one inscription, the city describes itself as the "nurturer" of the goddess, and the goddess in turn makes Ephesus the "most glorious" of the Asian cities.

People from the area would appreciate the irony of Paul's words about Christ nourishing His own body, the church (5:29). They would appreciate the point of contrast when Paul describes Christ's church as a glorious or radiant bride (5:27).

It is also in Ephesus that Paul's preaching of Christ comes into dramatic conflict with an important trade dependent on pagan worship (Acts 19:23-41), and that the gospel inspires a great turning away from the occult (Acts 19:17-20).

Paul's call to expose the deeds of darkness (5:8-14) and prepare for war against "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (6:12) would strike the original readers with special force.

The letter probably had a broader audience than Ephesus alone. Some of the oldest Greek manuscripts do not include "in
Ephesus" in the address of the letter (1:1), reading instead: "to the saints who are also faithful in Christ Jesus." Several early Christian writers seem unaware of a specifically Ephesian address. The letter lacks the personal references and greetings Paul almost always includes in his correspondence. At the same time, no manuscripts name any other city as the address of the epistle. Many scholars believe Ephesians was written as a general letter to a number of churches in the region. This would be in keeping with the sweeping contents of the letter as a whole.

It is likely that Paul originally sent the letter to Ephesus, but as the letter was sent from church to church the address was omitted because the contents had little to do with Ephesus in particular. Or it may be that the letter was originally in two forms, one for the Ephesians and one for general circulation.

CHARACTERISTICS AND THEMES

Like the letter to the Romans, Ephesians provides a special view into Paul's thought, since he had the luxury of addressing an important issue without the distraction of having to settle a local controversy.

The focus of Ephesians is the mystery of the church.
The church is God's new humanity, a colony where the Lord of history has established a foretaste of the renewed unity and dignity of the human race (1:10-14; 2:11-22; 3:6, 9-11; 4:1-6:9).

The church is a community where God's power to reconcile people to Himself is experienced and shared in transformed relationships (2:1-10; 4:1-16; 4:32-5:2; 5:22-6:9).

It is a new temple, a building of people, grounded in the sure revelation of what God has done in history (2:19-22; 3:17-19). The church is an organism where power and authority are exercised after the pattern of Christ (1:22; 5:25-27), and its stewardship is a means of serving Him (4:11-16; 5:22-6:9).

The church is an outpost in a dark world (5:3-17), looking for the day of final redemption. Above all, the church is the bride preparing for the approach of her lover and husband (5:22-32).
I. Salutation (1:1, 2)

II. Praise to God for Blessings in Christ (1:3-14)
   A. Elected by the Father (1:3-6)
   B. Redeemed by the Son (1:7-10)
   C. Sealed by the Spirit (1:11-14)

III. Prayer for the Church (1:15-23)

IV. Our Position in Christ (2:1-3:13)
   A. Reconciled with God and Seated with Christ (2:1-10)
   B. Reconciled with God's People and Growing into God's Temple (2:11-22)
   C. Recipients and Revealers of God's Mystery (3:1-13)

V. Prayer for the Church and Doxology (3:14-21)

VI. Our Walk in Christ: Toward Unity and Purity (4:1-6:9)
   A. Unity and Diversity (4:1-16)
   B. A New Mind (4:17-24)
   C. A New Walk: In Unity, Love, Purity, Light, and Wisdom (4:25-5:17)
   D. The Filling of the Spirit (5:18-6:9)
      1. In Worship and Submission to One Another (5:18-21)
      2. Mutual Submission in Specific Relationships (5:22-6:9)
         a. Husbands and Wives (5:22-33)
         b. Parents and Children (6:1-4)
         c. Masters and Slaves (6:5-9)

VII. Our Stand Against the Spiritual Forces of Darkness (6:10-20)
   A. Call to Arms Against Our Real Enemy (6:10-12)
   B. Our Armor, Weaponry and Strategy (6:13-20)

VIII. Final Greetings (6:21-24)

   • The Reformation Study Bible.
Introduction to Ephesians

Some think that this epistle to the Ephesians was a circular letter sent to several churches, and that the copy directed to the Ephesians happened to be taken into the canon, and so it came to bear that particular inscription. And they have been induced the rather to think this because it is the only one of all Paul's epistles that has nothing in it peculiarly adapted to the state or case of that particular church; but it has much of common concernment to all Christians, and especially to all who, having been Gentiles in times past, were converted to Christianity. But then it may be observed, on the other hand, that the epistle is expressly inscribed (1:1) to the saints which are at Ephesus; and in the close of it he tells them that he had sent Tychicus unto them, whom, in 2 Timothy 4:12, he says he had sent to Ephesus.

It is an epistle that bears date out of a prison: and some have observed that what this apostle wrote when he was a prisoner had the greatest relish and savour in it of the things of God. When his tribulations did abound, his consolations and experiences did much more abound, whence we may observe that the afflictive exercises of God's people, and particularly of his ministers, often tend to the advantage of others as well as to their own.

The apostle's design is to settle and establish the Ephesians in the truth, and further to acquaint them with the mystery of the gospel, in order to it.
In the former part he represents the great privilege of the Ephesians, who, having been in time past idolatrous heathens, were now converted to Christianity and received into covenant with God, which he illustrates from a view of their deplorable state before their conversion, ch. 1-3.

In the latter part (which we have in the 4th, 5th, and 6th chapters) he instructs them in the principal duties of religion, both personal and relative, and exhorts and quickens them to the faithful discharge of them. **Zanchy observes that we have here an epitome of the whole Christian doctrine, and of almost all the chief heads of divinity.**

- Matthew Henry's Commentary