

Book of Ephesians

I. General circumstances around the book

A. A wonderful letter for us

1. It is full of encouragement/admonishment for the Christian

- a. *How we are rooted in Christ – in His plan from eternity!*
- b. *How we are to “walk” according to righteousness!*
- c. *How we are to “stand” firm in the face of opposition*
- d. *Chapter 6 is famous for its discussion of the Christian armor that we are all to employ!*

B. Time of writing

1. Written by the hand of Paul at the end of the book of Acts

- a. *After his 3rd missionary journey when he was in prison in Rome – the first time*
- b. *Acts 28:30-31, “Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.” (NKJV)*

2. The date was around 59-61 CE : about 30 years after the church was founded!

C. Other letters

1. Paul also wrote other letters about this time as can be seen by:

- a. *The similarity between Ephesians/Colossians*
- b. *The same messenger (Tychicus) being sent to deliver Ephesians/Colossians*
- c. *The allusion to “being in chains in Ephesians/Philippians/Philemon*

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d. *The admonishment for a proper slave/master relationship in Ephesians/Philemon*

II. Theme of Ephesians

A. Ephesians is heavy on the theme of Christians being unified in the church

1. This was a problem especially in the first century due to the problems between Jew/gentile!

a. *Ephesians 1:3-6*, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,⁵ having **predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself**, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which **He has made us accepted in the Beloved.**”

b. *God predestined gentiles to “adoption” as sons; He has made them “accepted!*

c. *These terms used in opposition to the thoughts of the Jews, “children of Israel” or “God’s chosen people”*

d. *The gentiles had to be convinced, as did the Jews, that they were both accepted before God and must be unified spiritually!*

2. The Ephesians church was largely gentile!

a. *Paul went there during the 2nd missionary journey*

- *Acts 18:19-21*, “And he came to Ephesus, and left them there; but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.²⁰ When they asked him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent, ²¹ but took leave of them, saying, “I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing.” And he sailed from Ephesus.”

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- Stayed a very short time, but work was being done by Aquilla, Priscilla, and Apollos

b. Most work was done during the 3rd missionary journey

- Acts 19:8-10, “And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.⁹ But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.¹⁰ And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.”
- The Jews largely rejected the gospel, so that Paul had to preach at another location which was probably used to teach greek philosophy
- The conversion of gentiles was so great that the whole city was brought into an uproar over the worship of the idol Diana!

III. Part 1: Spiritual unity in the church

A. There was a tendency for the Jews and gentiles to remain separate

1. Peter was unsure about preaching to gentiles in Acts 10
2. Paul later had to confront Peter for withdrawing from gentiles in the presence of Jews!

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a. Galatians 2:11-14, “Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed;¹² for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. ¹³ And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, “If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?”

B. This was not in accordance with Christ!

1. Ephesians 1:7-14, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace⁸ which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,⁹ having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,¹⁰ that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth--in Him.¹¹ In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,¹² that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.¹³ In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”

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2. Ephesians 2:11-22, “Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh--who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands--12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,21 in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”
3. Ephesians 3:6-7, “that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,7 of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.”

C. God is serious about this idea of unity in His body

1. We should be serious about it as well
 - a. *Do we act like one? – we must!*
 - b. *This is how those outside will know we belong to God*

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- John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you **love one another; as I have loved you**, that you also love one another.³⁵ **By this all will know that you are My disciples**, if you have love for one another.”

IV. Part 2: A practical way to have spiritual unity in the church

A. Notice the natural idea transition between chapter 3 & 4

1. You are both considered as God’s children spiritually – now act that way!

a. Ephesians 4:1-3, “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to **walk worthy of the calling with which you were called**,² with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,³ endeavoring to **keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**.”

2. There was no need to act as if they were two, because what they were searching for, there was only one!

a. Ephesians 4:4-6, “There is **one body** and one Spirit, just as you were called in **one hope** of your calling; one Lord, **one faith**, **one baptism**;⁶ one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

B. Now the overriding theme of chapter 5 & 6 is the idea of the Christian “walk” – how they were to act!

1. Ephesians 4:17-19, “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that **you should no longer walk** as the rest of the Gentiles walk, **in the futility of their mind**,¹⁸ having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;¹⁹ who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.”

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2. Their walk had to be changed in Christ; they were to act differently, especially toward one another!
 - a. *Ephesians 4:32*, “**be kind to one another**, tenderhearted, **forgiving one another**, just as God in Christ forgave you.”
 - b. *Ephesians 5:2*, “And **walk in love**, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”
 - c. *Ephesians 5:15-16*, “See then that you **walk circumspectly**, not as fools but as wise, **redeeming the time**, because the days are evil.”

C. The latter part of chapter 5 speaks to how children of God are supposed to treat certain relationships while they walk this walk!

1. *Ephesians 5:21*, “**submitting to one another** in the fear of God.”
2. *Ephesians 5:22*, “**Wives**, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.”
3. *Ephesians 5:25*, “**Husbands**, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her”
4. *Ephesians 6:1*, “**Children**, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.”
5. *Ephesians 6:4*, “And you, **fathers**, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”
6. *Ephesians 6:5*, “**Bondservants**, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ”
7. *Ephesians 6:9*, “And you, **masters**, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.”

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D. The end of Chapter 6 turns our attention to outside evil forces that can devastate our soul

1. He has been encouraging us to “walk” righteously

2. Now he encourages and admonishes us to “stand”

- *As in do not fall!*

- *Ephesians 6:10-18, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.13 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.14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints”*

3. We must work on all those aspects of our spiritual life to be able to stand firm in the face of evil!

a. *Truth*

b. *Righteousness*

c. *Be prepared to spread the gospel*

d. *Faith*

e. *Assurance of salvation*

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f. Knowledge of the word of God

g. Prayer

V. Invitation

A. All those things, called Christian armor, are objective – concrete

1. The way of salvation is objective – it is concrete

2. It is told to us in the word of God

a. It doesn't involve a "feeling" and certainly not an "I think"

b. It involves an "I KNOW" because the word of God has said it!

- You need that kind of assurance!