

Lesson Forty-nine

Ephesians

	Our Position in Christ Section 1: What God has done for us (1) Emphasis: sovereignty Section 2: What Christ has done in us (2:1-10) Emphasis: grace Section 3: What Christ has done between us (2:11-3:21) Emphasis: reconciliation CHAPTERS 1-3	Our Practice on Earth Section 1: Our new unity (4:1-16) Section 2: Our new walk (4:17-6:9) Section 3: Our new strength (6:10-20) CHAPTERS 4-6
Introduction (1:1-2)		Conclusion (6:21-24)
Emphasis	Doctrinal: vertical relationship with God	Practical: horizontal relationship with others
Core Phrase	"He chose us in Him." (1:4)	"Walk in a manner worthy of the calling." (4:1)
Subjects	Declarations of heavenly truths (God's accomplishments)	Exhortations for earthly living (Christians' assignments)
Prayers	Paul's prayer for Ephesians (1:15-23)	Paul's prayer for the whole church (3:14-21) Christians' prayers for one another (6:18-20)
Theme	The holy community God is creating and how it is to live out its calling	
Key Verses	1:9-10; 4:1-3	
Christ in Ephesians	Jesus is the source of spiritual blessing, the Cornerstone of the church, and the goal of spiritual maturity (1:3; 2:20; 4:11-16).	

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Author: Though some critics have argued in later years that the style and vocabulary of Ephesians does not always sound like Paul, there is no strong reason for rejecting his authorship. Twice in this book, Paul refers to himself by name and there is no evidence to suggest any one other than Paul wrote this letter.

Audience: 1:1 states "*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus.*" The word, "in Ephesus" do not appear in some of the earliest manuscripts. This has led many scholars to believe that this was intended to be a circular letter, much like the letter to the Galatians, that was meant to be passed among several churches in a region. The fact that Paul does not mention any particular individuals in this letter also contributes to the belief that this letter was more to a group of churches in the region of Ephesus rather than to just the one church in the city. The church in the city of Ephesus may have been the primary church since Paul stayed there so long and since Ephesus was the capital city of the province of Asia.

Paul stayed in Ephesus longer than any other city (see Acts 19:10). His work there was the most visibly successful of all the places of his ministry. By the time Paul wrote this letter to the church, he was in prison (3:1, 4:1, and 6:20). This makes it the first book in the New Testament in what is commonly referred to as "the prison epistles."

Purpose: Unlike the letters to the churches in Corinth and Galatia, there was no particular problem raised in this book that Paul was addressing. He wrote to the church to expound upon his understanding of the doctrine of the church and to emphasize the importance of holy living, particularly in regard to family relationships.

There is a heavy emphasis on love contained throughout his letter. The verb form of "love" (*agapao*) is used 9 times in this short letter, whereas it is only used 23 times in all of his other letters combined. The noun form of "love" (*agape*) is used 10 times, whereas it is only used 65 times in his other letters. Therefore, of the 108 times Paul uses the word love, 19 are in this one letter. The letter begins with love (1:4,6) and ends with love (6:23-24).

More Than You Can Imagine

Ephesians 3:14-21

Someone has said that prayer truly is a window to our soul. We all pray for what concerns us or, put another way, what we truly care for, we pray for. The reverse of that is also true – what we don't care about, we don't pray about. That is pretty convicting isn't it? No matter how important we may say something is to us, if we don't ever bring it to God, then it is really not that important to us.

There are times, however, when we simply don't know how we should pray. The disciples didn't and so they asked Jesus to teach them. That is why He gave us the Model Prayer. It can be helpful to study prayers of saints in the Bible to help us learn how to pray. There are two prayers by the Apostle Paul in the book of Ephesians: one is found in chapter one and the other is our passage here for the deeper study. What can we learn about prayer from this passage?

I. THE PURPOSE OF THIS PRAYER

A. If we are honest, most of our prayers are about taking away our pain or changing our unpleasant circumstances. Yet, although Paul was in prison as he wrote this letter, those things never really entered into his prayer life. Instead, he prayed that the people of Ephesus would be "strengthened with power ...in their being."

B. It is interesting to note that the word "power" is used three times in this short passage. The word that is translated here is the word from which we get our English word "dynamite." Paul prays that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit will help us to "blast away" those things that make us feel weak in our inner being. Our greatest need is to experience His spiritual power on the inside.

II. THE PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF THIS PRAYER

A. As Paul prayed for his readers to be strengthened in their inner being, it was so some very specific things could be accomplished in their lives:

1. Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith – the word for "dwell" literally means to "be at home." Someone may tell you to "make yourself at home" in their house, but that is different from truly being in your own home where you dwell. One of the aspects of seeking God's power is that it makes God truly at home in our heart – He lives there, dwells there, has access to every part of our life. Our heart truly becomes His home.

2. Develop a growing comprehension of the love of Christ – Paul prays we will have an ever-growing appreciation for how much Christ loves us. When a couple first begins to date, they think they are in love. However, once they have been married 50 or 60 years, that love will have grown even more in depth. That is what Paul is praying – he prays that we may have a mature understanding of the love of God.

Interestingly enough, the early church took this phrase as a reference to the cross of Christ – the ultimate symbol of his love. "How wide and how long" refers to the horizontal bar of the cross, to which Christ's hands were nailed; "how high and deep" refers to the vertical bar of the cross to which His feet were nailed.

3. Experience the fullness of God in your life – this is the goal of the Christian life; to be filled with God. We are created to be the containers for God so He can pour Himself into us and we can be filled with Him. If you had a jar that contained muddy water, the best way to replace it with clean water would be to put a hose in the jar and turn on the clean water. Eventually, the clean would displace the muddy water in the jar. That is what God desires for us – our lives are jars of muddy water – some more so than others – but we are to be so filled with His holiness that our lives are cleaned by Him.

III. THE PROMISE OF THIS PRAYER

A. This is a big prayer, but God is able! Remember – God can do more than you can even pray for! He can do more than we can even dream of; we just have to trust in Him!