

Notes & Outlines

EPHESIANS

J. Vernon McGee

THE PRISON EPISTLES

A quartet of men left Rome in the year A.D. 62, bound for the province of Asia, which was located in what was designated as Asia Minor and is currently called Turkey. These men had on their persons four of the most sublime compositions of the Christian faith. These precious documents would be invaluable if the originals were in existence today. Rome did not comprehend the significance of the writings by an unknown prisoner. If she had, these men would have been apprehended and the documents seized.

When they bade farewell to the apostle Paul, each was given an epistle to bear to his particular constituency. These four letters are designated the “prison epistles of Paul,” since he wrote them while imprisoned in Rome. He was awaiting a hearing before Nero who was the Caesar at that time. Paul, as a Roman citizen, had appealed his case to the emperor, and he was waiting to be heard.

- (1) Epaphroditus from Philippi (Philippians 4:18) had the Epistle to the Philippians.
- (2) Tychicus from Ephesus (Ephesians 6:21) had the Epistle to the Ephesians.
- (3) Epaphras from Colosse (Colossians 4:12) had the Epistle to the Colossians.
- (4) Onesimus (Philemon’s slave) from Colosse (Philemon 10) had the Epistle to Philemon.

These epistles present a composite picture of Christ, the church, the Christian life, and the interrelationship and functioning of all three. These different facets present the Christian life on the highest plane.

EPHESIANS presents “the church, which is his body” (Ephesians 1:22, 23) — this is the invisible church, of which Christ is the head.

COLOSSIANS presents Christ who is “the head of the body, the church” (Colossians 1:18). The emphasis is upon Christ rather than on the church.

PHILIPPIANS presents Christian living, with Christ as the dynamic: “I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13).

PHILEMON presents Christian living in action in a pagan society. “If thou count me, therefore, a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee anything, put that on mine account” (Philemon 17, 18). The gospel walked in shoe leather in the first century — it worked.

In EPHESIANS, Christ is exalted above all things, God having “put all things under his feet” (Ephesians 1:22). Christ is the center of the circle of which the church is the periphery.

In COLOSSIANS, Christ is the fullness of God (*pleroma*). He is the periphery of the circle of which Christian living is the center (Colossians 2:9, 10).

In PHILIPPIANS, Christ is the center of the circle; Christian living is the periphery. The *kenosis* (emptying) is given (Philippians 2:5-8).

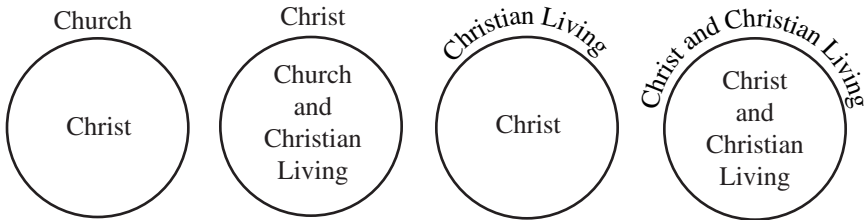
In PHILEMON, Christ is both the center and circumference: “Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints” (Philemon 5).

EPHESIANS

COLOSSIANS

PHILIPPIANS

PHILEMON



EPHESIANS

WRITER: Paul (1:1)

DATE: About A.D. 62

Paul arrived in Rome in A.D. 61 as a prisoner, and for 2 years he lived in his own hired house where he received those who came to him (Acts 28:16, 30).

THEME:

Ephesians reveals the church as God’s masterpiece (*poema* — see Ephesians 2:10), a mystery not revealed in the Old Testament. It is more wonderful than any temple made with hands, because it is constructed of living stones and indwelt by the Holy Spirit (2:20-22). It is the body of Christ in the world — to walk as He would walk and to wrestle against the wiles of the devil (1:22, 23; 4:1; 6:11, 12). Someday the church will leave the world and be presented to Christ as a bride (5:25-32).

Dr. Pierson called Ephesians “Paul’s third-heaven epistle.” Another has called it “the Alps of the New Testament.” It is the Mt. Whitney of the High Sierras of all Scripture. This is the *Church Epistle*.

TITLE:

The inscription (*en Epheso*) is omitted from the better manuscripts. It is thought that the Epistle to the Ephesians was a circular epistle, which included Ephesus and thereby explains the insertion of its name in some manuscripts. It is likewise thought that this epistle is the one to the Laodiceans

referred to in Colossians 4:16. This could correspond to the last of the seven letters to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3 rather than to the first church. The contents of the Ephesian letter correspond more to the condition of the Ephesian church than to the one in Laodicea.

John Eadie concludes that this epistle is Paul's message to the church in Ephesus. He quotes from the testimony of the early church to sustain this thesis (Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian).

Ephesians is the great church epistle, intended for all churches irrespective of geography, for the church is "one body" and its location is "in the heavenlies."

PAUL AND EPHEBUS:

The Holy Spirit forbade Paul, on his second missionary journey, to enter the province of Asia — where Ephesus was the prominent center.

Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. (Acts 16:6)

He traveled west until he came to the sea, where it was necessary for God, by means of a vision, to direct him to Macedonia. He was led by the Spirit into Europe as far as Corinth, after which he returned by way of Ephesus.

And he came to Ephesus, and left them there, but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. (Acts 18:19)

Being favorably impressed by the opportunities for missionary work, he promised to return. This he did on the third missionary journey. He discovered that another, by the name of Apollos, had been there in the interval between his second and third missionary journeys; but Apollos had preached only the baptism of John — not the gospel of grace. Paul began a ministry there that was far-reaching. For two years he spoke in the school of Tyrannus, and the gospel penetrated into every center of the province of Asia. Evidently, it was at this time that the churches addressed in Revelation 2 and 3 were founded as a result of this ministry of Paul.

And he went into the synagogue, and spoke boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened, and believed not, but spoke evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one, Tyrannus. And this continued for the space of two years; so that all they who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. (Acts 19:8-10)

This was probably the “high water mark” in the missionary labors of Paul. He considered Ephesus his great opportunity and stayed there longer than in any other place. The people of Ephesus heard more Bible teaching from Paul than did any other people, which is the reason he could write to them the deep truths contained in this epistle.

But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door, and effectual, is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries. (1 Corinthians 16:8, 9)

He met great opposition, but God marvelously preserved him, which encouraged him to continue (see Acts 19:23-41). Paul loved this church in Ephesus. His last meeting with the Ephesian elders was a tender farewell (see Acts 20:17-38).

Ephesus was the principal city of Asia Minor — and probably of the entire eastern section of the Roman Empire. It was virile and aggressive at this time, while the culture of Athens was decadent, and the commercialism of Corinth was corroded with immorality.

The Temple of Diana was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, being the largest Greek temple ever constructed (418 by 239 feet). It was built over a marsh on an artificial foundation of skins and charcoal so that it was not affected by earthquakes.

The quarries of Mount Prion had supplied the marble; the art and wealth of Ephesian citizens and the jewellery of Ephesian ladies had been plentifully contributed for its adornment; its hundred and twenty-seven graceful columns, some of them richly carved and colored, were each the gift of a king; its doors, ceiling, and staircase were formed respectively of cypress, cedar, and vine-wood; it had an altar by Praxiteles and a picture by Apelles; and in its coffered reposed no little of the opulence of Western Asia. Thus Xenophon deposited in it the tithe...which had been set apart at Athens from the sale of slaves at Cerasus...a many-breasted idol of wood, rude as an African fetish, was worshipped in its shrine, in some portion of which a meteoric stone may have been inserted, the token of its being “the image that fell from Jupiter”...still further, a flourishing trade was carried on in the manufacture of silver shrines...or models of a portion of the temple. These are often referred to by ancient writers, and as few strangers seem to have left Ephesus without such a memorial of their visit, this artistic “business brought no small gain to the craftsmen.” But the spread of Christianity was fast destroying such gross and material superstition and idolatry, for one of its first lessons was, as Demetrius

rightly declared — “they be no gods which are made with hands.” (John Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*)

OUTLINE:

I. **Doctrinal**, Chapters 1 — 3

The **heavenly calling** of the church (vocalization)

A. **The church is a BODY**, Chapter 1

1. Introduction, vv. 1, 2
2. God the Father **planned** the church, vv. 3-6
“A body hast thou prepared me” (Hebrews 10:5)
3. God the Son **paid** the price for the church, vv. 7-12
“Redemption through his blood” (v. 7)
4. God the Holy Spirit **protects** the church, vv. 13, 14
“By one Spirit were we all baptized into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13)
5. **Prayer** for knowledge and power, vv. 15-23

B. **The church is a TEMPLE**, Chapter 2

1. The **material** for construction, vv. 1-10
Those “dead in trespasses” (v. 1) are made into a living temple
2. The **method** of construction, vv. 11-18
3. The **meaning** of the construction (*quo animo*), vv. 19-22
“Groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord” (v. 21)

C. **The church is a MYSTERY**, Chapter 3

1. The **explanation** of the mystery, vv. 1-4
Not revealed in the Old Testament
2. The **definition** of the mystery, vv. 5-13
Jews and Gentiles are partakers of the same body — the church
3. **Prayer** for power and knowledge, vv. 14-21
“Strengthened with might” (v. 16) and “to know the love of Christ” (v. 19)

II. **Practical**, Chapters 4 — 6

The **earthly conduct** of the church (vocation)

A. **The church is a NEW MAN**, Chapter 4

1. The **exhibition** of the new man, vv. 1-6
“Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit” (v. 3)

2. The **inhibition** of the new man, vv. 7-16
“No more children”(v. 14); *“grow up into him”*(v. 15); *“perfect man”* (v. 13)
3. The **prohibition** of the new man, vv. 17-32
“Walk not as other Gentiles walk” (v. 17); *“be ye kind one to another”* (v. 32)

B. The church will be a BRIDE, Chapter 5

1. The **engagement** of the church, vv. 1-17
“For I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2)
2. The **experience** of the church, vv. 18-24
“Be filled with the Spirit” (v. 18)
3. The **expectation** of the church, vv. 25-33
“That he might present it to himself a glorious church” (v. 27)

C. The church is a SOLDIER, Chapter 6

1. The soldier’s **relationships**, vv. 1-9
“No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life” (2 Timothy 2:4)
2. The soldier’s **enemy**, vv. 10-12
“The wiles of the devil” (v. 11)
3. The soldier’s **protection**, vv. 13-18
“The whole armor of God” (v. 13)
4. The soldier’s **example** — Paul, a good soldier of Jesus Christ, vv. 19-22
5. The soldier’s **benediction**, vv. 23, 24

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

- Bruce, F. F. *The Epistle to the Ephesians*. Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1961.
- Eadie, John. *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*. London: R. Griffin, 1854.
- Foulkes, Francis. *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963.
- Hendriksen, William. *Exposition of Ephesians*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1967.
- Hodge, Charles. *An Exposition of Ephesians*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1856.
- Ironside, H. A. *In the Heavenlies*. Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1937. (Especially good for young Christians.)
- Kelly, William. *Lectures on Ephesians*. Oak Park, Illinois: Bible Truth Publishers, n.d.
- Kent, Homer A., Jr. *Ephesians: The Glory of the Church*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1971. (An excellent, inexpensive survey.)
- McGee, J. Vernon. *Exploring Through Ephesians*. Pasadena, California: Thru the Bible Books, 1961.
- Meyer, F. B. *Ephesians — Key Words of the Inner Life*. Fort Washington, Pennsylvania: Christian Literature Crusade, n.d. (Devotional.)
- Moule, Handley C. G. *Studies in Ephesians*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1893. (Excellent. Romans, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon in the same series; 2 Timothy apart from this series.)
- Paxson, Ruth. *Wealth, Walk, and Warfare of the Christian*. Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1939. (Excellent devotional emphasis.)
- Strauss, Lehman. *Devotional Studies in Galatians and Ephesians*. Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1957.
- Vaughan, W. Curtis. *Ephesians: A Study Guide Commentary*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.
- Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be Rich*. Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, n.d.
- Wuest, Kenneth S. *Ephesians and Colossians in the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953.

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