

**A STUDY ON EPHESIANS**

**Week 1**

**Ephesians 1**

**Being the true Church  
through the members of the Church**

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# THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

This Letter wants to help believers to understand who they truly are in Christ, and how they should work together as the Church of Christ to make a difference in this world.

## Prison Letters

Ephesians, along with Colossians, Philemon and Philippians, are all part of what is known as the “Prison Letters” of Paul, also known as the *Imprisonment Epistles*. This is because Paul wrote all 4 of these Letters while in prison (as for Ephesians see Ephesians 3:1, 4:1 and 6:19-20). It is also noteworthy that *Ephesians*, *Colossians* and *Philemon* probably relate better to an *earlier period* of imprisonment with a lot of emphasis on *suffering*, while *Philippians* refers to a period a *bit later* in Paul’s prison time with vague references to chains and almost a repeating refrain of *Christian joy despite suffering*.

Thus, one might conclude (and this is simply one plausible scenario) that *Colossians*, *Ephesians* and *Philemon* could have been written somewhere between 56 and 58 AD during Paul’s prison time in the *coastal city of Caesarea*. A little later then, perhaps in the spring of 60 AD *Philippians* could have been written during Paul’s two year period of house arrest in *Rome*, following the 2 year prison time in Caesarea.

## Some other Interesting Facts

*Paul*, an apostle of Christ Jesus, writes to the church in *Ephesus*, *Asia Minor* (currently in *Southwest Turkey*). *Tychicus*, of whom we read in Eph 6:21, one of Paul’s helpers, took this Letter to the church in Ephesus and some other churches. He also delivered the Colossae Letter (Col 4:7-8), and brought news about Paul to the believers.

*A close relation between Ephesians and Colossians* is undeniable. If you would read the two letters side by side you’d be amazed at the similarities. They are very close in how Christ and the church are presented, the roles of Tychicus, Archippus, and Onesimus as fellow brothers and servants of Paul in the Lord, and finally similarities in literary style and word use.

## Ephesians 1:1-14, God made a special plan for you and me

Paul presents right from the start that God is the “Founder and Director” of the Church! He created the Church through salvation in His Son, He molds the Church and blesses the Church with all the gifts that are necessary to make a difference in this world and glorify Him! God gives everything that the Church needs to the Church through the members of the Church—normal believers, enabled, gifted and called to do abnormal, incredible things to bring life and transformation to the world.

This is all the more reason for the Church to live as one for the glory of the one God! Therefore no fighting and division should ever tear the Church apart, or divide or weaken it. The Church should be on the watch, knowing that the devil will do everything it can to hurt the Church, but believers can know and trust their God that they will always prevail as long as they stay close to God.

The challenge for the Church is to be truly Church within the world that they live in—every day, everywhere!

### *Ephesians 1:1-2*

- v. 1a, by the will of God - specially called by God to do exactly what God wants.
  - v. 1b, saints - set apart by God (OT background - set apart for service of God in temple, tabernacle...).
  - v. 1b, in - 11 times in vv. 1-14... Christian’s lives should be lived out in Christ! Physically we’re in the world and spiritually we’re in Christ (Col 3:1-3). The Christian’s total existence is within Christ...and then of course His body!
  - v. 2 - everything that’s truly worth anything comes from only one place, God.
- ❖ How will an understanding of verse 1 help us to truly be faithful in our walk with the Lord?

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*Ephesians 1:3-6*

- v. 3 - Everything that we need to be an effective Church (body of Christ) on this earth, we have in Christ!
  - vv. 4-6 - IN CHRIST you were chosen...even since before creation?! Once this truth really settles in our souls, how can we not strive to be holy and blameless...?! IN LOVE we became a part of God's Family. GOD WANTED to do this (we had nothing to do with this), and IN JESUS God made certain that it got done. To what end? Simply to the "praise of His glorious grace": So that His Family/Church/Children can constantly reflect Who He is and What He has done for all, out of His grace and love, according to His pleasure and will, through His Son.
- ❖ How does this help you to understand "predestination" a bit better?
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*Ephesians 1:7-8*

- vv. 7-8 - It seems important to understand: What happened "IN Christ"? The short answer: Everything! Everything changed! We shifted from *being nothing* to being *everything*, from being *enemies of God* to the *family of God*, from being in *darkness* to being in the *light*, from being *lost* to *found*, from *having nothing* to *having everything*! IN HIM (CHRIST) we were set free from being chained to sin and death (redemption) at high cost (through His blood), to have peace with God (forgiven...something that doesn't come easy/natural at all for humans). That God did all of this knowing that we cannot pay Him back for any of it in any way simply shows that His wisdom and His insight is not the same as ours, and He has poured it all out without any boundaries...a superabundance of Godly giving (lavished grace), poured out over our completely lost and broken lives.
- ❖ How does an "in Christ"-mindset changes your view of yourself and what you are called to?

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*Ephesians 1:9-10*

- vv. 9-10 - For a long time we knew that a Messiah was coming, but it was like a Godly mystery. But then, when God decided the time was right, everything was made clear to us in Jesus. In Him God's plan was revealed to all of us. In Jesus all things in heaven and earth can be brought back together again as it was intended with creation, with Jesus ruling over it all. That this plan can be successfully executed became clear in Jesus' first coming, and will come to its glorious fulfillment in Jesus' second coming. And till then? As the Body of the Head, the Church IN CHRIST is at the center of it all, totally part of it all, completely in action-mode, in total partnership, as this fulfillment continues to unfold!
  - ❖ How would you describe God's plan now?
  - ❖ How do you see your role in God's plan?
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*Ephesians 1:11-12*

- vv. 11-12 - God has decided long ago that all who are IN CHRIST will belong to Him, and everything surely happens exactly as God wills it. Just as the Jewish people grasped this first, and were to show Who God is and What He has done for the world (see also Isaiah 43:21), we should continue to do the same.
- ❖ What was God's mission?
- ❖ What should our mission be?
- ❖ Can we really come up with an excuse not to be excited and a part of God's mission?

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*Ephesians 1:13-14*

- vv. 13-14 - Everyone who has listened to the Truth, and made the Gospel Message of salvation IN CHRIST their own through faith, is from that moment included in the family of God, IN CHRIST. This is why God gives to us the Holy Spirit which He promised. It is as if we carry a “divine mark” to show that we belong to Jesus. What we have and who we are in the Holy Spirit reminds us that God began a work in us, that He started to lavishly pour Himself into us, and that this is a guarantee that it will all be fulfilled to His glory in Jesus’ second coming. IN CHRIST we will be set completely free from sin and death, forever, with every bit of our entire being fully belonging to God and receiving fully all that our Father has in store for us and promised us. This is a message we need to tell to all, so all can praise the Glory of our God!
  - ❖ How is this shifting your understanding of the blessing and the work of the Holy Spirit in your life?
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## **Ephesians 1:15-23, May we grow!**

*Ephesians 1:15-18*

- vv. 15-16 - How awesome would it be if others start talking about our spiritual growth, our strong and steadfast faith in the Lord, and our love for the Church (body of Christ). This is indeed something that one wants to pray over, faithfully!
- v. 17 - Paul makes it clear though that even this doesn’t mean we should not set our eyes on spiritual growth. In fact, he keeps praying that God, our glorious Father, will continue to give us all we need to make God glorifying choices, live more intimately with our God, and know His heart better.

- v. 18 - Paul continues to pray for something so important: Open spiritual eyes. Without seeing past the things in this world, we can't see what we already have in God - what is His, is yours...what more would you ever need, child of the living God, your Father?! Through God you've been called to a solid Hope IN GOD - we should therefore know what we can ask for and receive from our great God!
  - ❖ What would you like to pray about more after you read these passages?
  - ❖ What are some next steps in your spiritual growth?
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*Ephesians 1:19-23*

- vv. 19-21 - It is time for us to recognize that the power of God is stronger than anything else. We saw God's power at work IN CHRIST when He died and was raised from the dead to take the most important place in the heavens. This power is now also at work in God's children...in you! Christ rules over all, over all rulers on earth, and nothing or nobody will ever be more important or stronger than our Lord. This is true now, was true, and will continue to be true, forever!
  - vv. 22-23 - God Himself gave Jesus the mightiest position to rule over all, even the Church. As the Leader of the Church, the Church should follow in obedience, just as the body cannot do different than what its head dictates. Body and head are one, and the influence of the head not only directs, but flows through the entire body, making certain every little part has all it needs to do all the head wants it to do. This is exactly what our Lord, as Head of the Church, His body, does for us! Of course it only makes sense that the body then in return allows the Head to be all the Head should be!
  - ❖ How do you think about the power of God, and how that applies to your life?
  - ❖ Do you think a bit differently now about Jesus as the Head of the Church, and you and me as His body? In which ways will this continue to transform your walk with the Lord and His Church?
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