

EPHESIANS - An Introductory Paper

(not for use in the meeting)

Written by Paul to the church at Ephesus probably while in prison in Rome. Date about 62 AD.

Ephesus was a large, pagan city and Paul had spent 3 busy and eventful years there. Read Acts 19.1-41 to get the back ground to this church. He found a form of Christianity already there but it was shallow and incomplete and Paul spent his time in serious teaching to enable the church and new converts to 'grow up in every way into him who is the head, even Christ'.

The *Word Life Study Bible* says 'Many Christians tend to embrace what might be called a subjective or personal gospel: what matters is not whether the message is true but what it can do for *me*. Can it help solve *my* problems, meet *my* needs, help *me* feel okay, improve *my* relationships, etc. Ephesians was written for believers in these kinds of circumstances'.

John Stott says 'Ephesians is the gospel of the Church. It sets forth God's eternal purpose to create through Jesus Christ a new kind of society of people in bright contrast to the drab old world: a society characterised by life in place of death, by unity, forgiveness and reconciliation in place of division, by righteousness in place of corruption, by love and peace in place of hatred and strife and by opposition to evil in place of a flabby compromise with it. Lovelessness and sin in so many contemporary churches dishonour Christ, contradict the nature of the Church and deprive Christian witness of its power'. Paul sets his deep vision of Christ and His Church in an all-embracing understanding of God's eternal purpose, extending back through time and going on beyond time into eternity.

The epistle (as usual with Paul) falls into two parts: the first theological and the second practical. First what we believe and then how we are to live because of it. The epistle shows what it means to be 'members of the Body of Christ', 'new people in Christ Jesus' and 'children of God'. It shows us how to live life together in the church on a level worthy of the staggering privileges that God has given us.

Suggested Sessions

1. Eph. 1.1-14. Chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son and sealed by the Spirit.
2. 1.15-23. First a prayer for open eyes and then the Church as the Body of Christ.
3. 2.1-10. What God has done.
4. 2.11-22. Jesus breaks the barriers. All one in Christ.
5. 3.1-21. Where is it all going? And a great prayer.
6. 4.1-16. Unity in the Body of Christ. Gifts and their purpose.
7. 4.17-5.2. Put off and put on.
8. 5.3-20. Walking as Children of Light.
9. 5.21-6.9. All our relationships are new in Christ.
10. 6.10-23. The armour of God.

Some things to look out for in this Epistle: (Epistle = Letter)

'In love' appears 6 times in this epistle. Note the contexts.

'In the heavenly places' appears 5 times. Note the contexts.

Note the 10 references to the Holy Spirit and many references to prayer.