

The Letter to the Ephesians

Introduction

Today I'll do the introduction to a new series on Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

It is good to realize that the apostle Paul uses many very long sentences in this letter. In our Bibles these sentences are broken down into various verses and in most translations each sentence is broken down into smaller sentences.

The letter as such can be divided in 4 major sections.

Especially the second and third section can still be divided in several subsections. These are the sections that I will focus on today.

But before looking at the major sections, let's take a look at some information on Ephesus first.

Ephesus

- Capital of Asia Minor (Turkey, near Selçuk) in Roman times
- Major city with a mixed population of approx. 300.000
- Well-known for the temple of the goddess Artemis
- Religious opposition from the Jews
- Religious/commercial opposition from silversmiths
- Paul spent there approx. 3 years (Acts 20:30)
- Also Apollos, Aquila, Priscilla and Timothy were active there
- Some Jewish exorcists tried to imitate the driving out of evil spirits in the name of Jesus.

Ephesus was a well-known and rich city.

Acts chapters 18 and 19 give us some background on the city and its population.

Part of her riches came from the trade of various silver items regarding the Greek goddess Artemis, as Ephesus had a huge temple dedicated to her.

As the silversmiths in the city feared loss of income they caused a riot against Paul and the disciples of Christ in Ephesus.

Paul also experienced opposition from the local Jews, which eventually caused a split between the disciples of Christ and the local Jewish community.

On his way back to Jerusalem he asked to elders of the church in Ephesus to come to him for a final farewell (Acts 20).

Let's now take a look at the major sections.

Major sections

- **1:1-2**
- **1:3-4:16**
- **4:17-6:20**
- **6:21-6:24**
- **Opening verses**
- **The coordinated work of the Trinity**
- **Expected impact in our lives**
- **Closing verses**

As you can see the second and the third section form the major part of the letter. Of these two sections the second section obviously is the biggest. As such this letter is focusing on what God has done and is doing and what we see in the third section is focusing on the expected result of that in our lives.

Let's take a look at the subsections of the second section.

The coordinated work of the Trinity

- **1:3-14**
 - **1:15-2:3**
 - **2:4-10**
 - **2:11-22**
 - **3:1-13**
 - **3:14-21**
 - **4:1-16**
- **In Christ alone**
 - **Revelation of God**
 - **Saved by Grace**
 - **The Prince of Peace**
 - **The Great Mystery and Secret Riches of God**
 - **Revelation of the Love of Christ**
 - **The One Body of Christ**

From here we will take a quick look into each of these subsections.

Work and Blessings of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

- 1:1-2
- 1:3-14
- Opening verses
- In Christ alone

In the first sermon the opening verses will be included.

The second reference is the first subsection of section 2 and it talks specifically about the activities of each person of the Trinity.

In the following verse you see why we choose this subtitle for the main part of this section.

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, 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, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.

As a matter of fact, in the original letter the verses 3-14 consist of one sentence only.

Since I had to shorten it a bit I choose this first part as it shows us clearly that it is in Christ alone that we receive all the blessings from God.

Let's go to the next section.

Hope, Riches and Power

- 1:15-2-3
- Revelation of God

In the next section we will focus on how God revealed His plans in His Word.

We see that in the following verses.

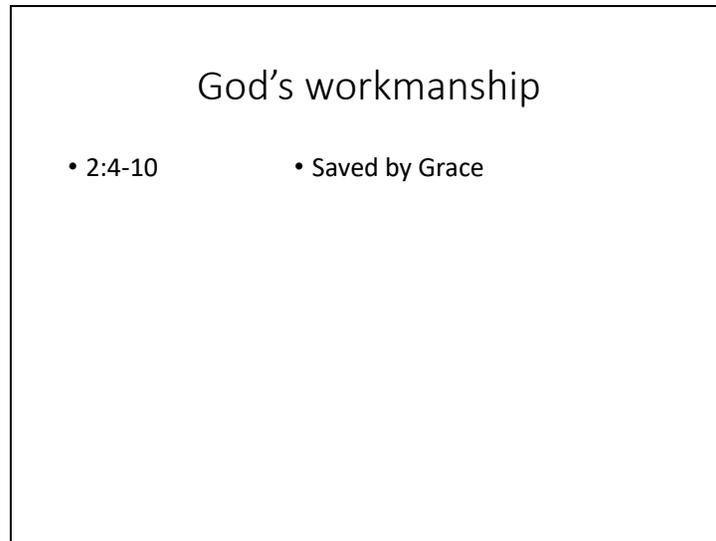
Ephesians 1:15-18

- Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

Paul is praying for the recipients of his letter that God will give them the understanding that they need.

After all, we know that God's ways are higher than our ways, so we cannot understand His ways unless He reveals them unto us.

Let's go to the next section.



This is one of the foundational teachings of our faith.

We find it in the following verses.

Ephesians 2:8-10

- For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.
- For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

I don't have to add anything to these verses, they are clear in themselves.

They make clear that our salvation is the work of God and of God only.

Let's continue.

The Prince of Peace

- 2:11-22
- Saved and United in Christ

There is no other way to be saved than by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the only name given under the sun by which we can be saved, there is no other savior than the Lord Jesus Christ.

We see that also in the following verses.

Ephesians 2:14-16

- For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 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, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

Again these verses are very clear, so I do not have to add any further comment.

Let's continue.

The Great Mystery and Secret Riches of God

- 3:1-7
- 3:8-13
- Revelation of the Mystery of Christ
- Revelation of the manifold wisdom of God

In this subsection we will look at the revelation of these things.

We see that for instance in the next verses.

Ephesians 3:8-12

- To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.

These verses describe an important task of the church.

This is one of the reasons why the principalities and powers in the unseen world are furiously opposing the message of the gospel and persecute the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's continue.

To know the Love of Christ

- 3:14-21
- Revelation of the Love of Christ

Just like all things about God and Christ so we also cannot fully understand the love of Christ without God specifically revealing it to us. We see that in the next verses.

Ephesians 3:14-19

- For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height — to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Again Paul prays for the recipients of his letter that God may give them the right understanding of the love of Christ.

Otherwise they would never be able to truly understand it.

Let's continue.

The One Body of Christ

- 4:1-16
- One Body

Another important doctrine regarding the worldwide church:
Together we form the one Body of Christ.

We see that in the next verses.

Ephesians 4:1-6

- I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Especially in the last verses on this sheet we see the word one repeated again and again.

Let's keep that in mind as we deal with one another and with other brothers and sisters in Christ.

Let's go to the subsections of the third major section.

Expected Impact on our Lives

- **4:17-4:32** • **Transformation by the Renewal of your Mind**
- **5:1-21** • **As a New Creation in Christ walking in the Light**
- **5:22-6:9** • **Instructions regarding various relationships**
- **6:10-20** • **Fighting the Spiritual Battle**

These are the subsections of the third major section.

Transformation by the renewal of
your mind

- 4:17-24 • Be renewed in the spirit of your mind
- 4:25-32 • Putting of the old man

This issue we also found in Romans 12:1-2, isn't it?

But Paul brings it also up in this letter as we also see from the following verses.

Ephesians 4:20-24

- But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

Again, I'm not going to add too much comment to these verses. After all, we'll deal with all these sections later on in an extended form.

So, let's go further.

As a new creation in Christ
walking in the light

- 5:1-2 • Walk in love
- 5:3-14 • Walking in darkness vs. Walking in the Light
- 5:15-21 • Walking in the Light

This too has to do with a change in our way of living after we have been saved by grace through faith.

Let's look at the next sheet at some related verses.

Ephesians 5:1-2, 8-10

- Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.
- 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.
- For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.

Again I had to make a selection of all the verses in this section. But at least these ones give you a clear idea what it is about.

Let's continue.

Instructions regarding various relationships

- 5:22-24 • Instruction to Wives
- 5:25-33 • Instruction to Husbands
- 6:1-4 • Instruction to Children
- 6:5-9 • Instruction to servants/slaves and masters

For this section I did not select any specific verses, as they are all dealing with very specific instructions to specific people groups. What we will have to keep in mind is the fact that we can fulfill these instructions only in the strength we receive from God, especially through the outpouring of the love of God in our hearts.

Let's continue.

Fighting the Spiritual Battle using the Armor of God

- 6:10-20 • Fighting the Spiritual Battle
- 6:21-22 • The reason for sending Tychicus
- 6:23-24 • Final Greetings

This sermon will be on the last sub-section of the third major section and on the closing verses of the letter.

We have dealt with the first eleven verses in this last sub-section during the series on spiritual warfare.

Let's take a look at a few verses of them

Ephesians 6:10-13

- Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.
- Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
- 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.
- 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.

In an earlier section we already touched on this subject also.

God has provided the armor we need in order to be able to stand in this battle. Let's make sure we always wear and use it.

With these verses we've come to the end of this preview. May God bless all of us through the various sermons on the different sections of this letter.

Let's pray!