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WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES

CABINET: 7:00 AM Wednesdays, location undisclosed, refreshments served.
SENATE: 8:00 AM Tuesdays, rotating offices, hot breakfast served.
HOUSE: 7:30 AM Thursdays, The Capitol Hill Club, hot breakfast served.



The ancient Greek city of Ephesus in Izmir, Turkey.

THIS WEEK I WOULD LIKE TO SURVEY ONE of my favorite books of the Bible—the apostle Paul's profound letter to the Church at Ephesus.

I think you will agree with me that these six Bible chapters are worth mastering for the sake of personal edification and wisdom in policy making. Herein is the revealed mind of God transmitted to you for the purposes of thinking the way He thinks on complex issues. Be intent to learn the mind of God from His Book!

Read on, my friend!

Ralph Drollinger

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John Arch
Nebraska State Senator
Legislative District 14



"I have thoroughly enjoyed the weekly Bible studies led by Perry Gauthier. The content has been excellent, and it is a great opportunity to meet with others who desire to see God's will accomplished in the Nebraska legislature. That support provided by others is a great encouragement each week. The mornings start early with a drive from Omaha, but every week I am so glad I came. Special thanks to Perry and Faith for their commitment and service to all of us!"

— JOHN ARCH

Nebraska Senator Arch attends the Bible study that Perry Gauthier, Ministry Leader and CM North America Director, has led for 12 years.

Books of the Bible: Ephesians

I. NAME

Some of the earlier Greek manuscripts from which we derive our modern English translation of the Bible do not specify the Church at Ephesus as the singular recipient of this epistle. Some scholars therefore believe that it was intended to be an encyclical, a manuscript that first was sent to Ephesus with the intention that it be circulated and read by all the churches of Asia Minor.

The apostle Paul is clearly indicated as the author in the opening salutation (1:1; 3:1). The epistle is written during his imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28:16–31) between A.D. 60–62, along with Philemon, Philippians, and Colossians. It is therefore one of the four so-called prison epistles (which are easily remembered by organizing the first letters of each book as PEPC, with the E standing for Ephesians). The letter was sent from Rome to Ephesus via Tychicus (cf. Ephesians 6:21–22).

II. BACKGROUND

Aquila and Priscilla, a spiritually gifted couple first brought the gospel to Ephesus (see Acts 18:26). The apostle Paul had left them there on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:18–19). Later, on Paul's third missionary journey, he would spend three years pastoring and building up the church (Acts 19) to the point that they had their own elders, deacons, and female deacons (1 Timothy 3). Some years after this Paul installed Timothy to be the pastor and he served the congregation for several years. Timothy's job (as we read in 1st and 2nd Timothy) was very difficult as he turned the church around from the heretical teachings of Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Timothy 1:20) who had commandeered it and led it in a heretical direction between the pastorate of Paul and himself. These prominent false teachers had nearly ruined the congregation with their pervasive bad doctrine. For instance, they forbade marriage (1 Timothy 4:3). Some thirty years after Timothy restored the church, it is chastised in the Book of Revelation for having left its first love. The congregation remained doctrinally correct but evidently had lost the passion of their personal relationship to Christ and the zeal they once possessed to further of His Kingdom throughout the world (Revelation 2:1–7). Paul warned against this tendency a bit in Ephesians 3:19 when he says,

“... and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.”

The site of Ephesus is located in modern-day Turkey several miles inland from the Aegean Sea (once a sea port village, the waterway/inlet had long-ago become silted in). Ephesus was the location of the Temple of Artemis or Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

IV. EMPHASIS AND THEMES

This epistle is evenly divided between positional and practical truths. In the first three chapters, Paul discusses the profound truths of the believers' position in Christ (cf. 1:4, 11, 2:1, 13). The remaining three chapters discuss what should be the practical outworking of that reality in one's behavior. The pivoting passage, found in 4:1 underscores this idea:

“Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called.”

In essence, the whole of the Epistle reasons, “Since the believer has been lavished with blessings by God at the point of salvation, does it not follow that the believer should act out in a commensurate manner?! By means of validation, the word “fullness/filled” appears six times in the letter; “glory,” nine times; “grace,” twelve times; “in Christ,” eleven times; and “riches” appears five times. Believers owe a debt of gratitude to please the One who saves and empowers them for not only victorious, purposeful living in the present, but eternal security in the future!

The three major themes discussed are as follows:

A. THE BELIEVER'S BLESSINGS IN CHRIST

This is one of the most important books of the Bible in terms of understanding the predetermined destiny of God's called-out ones. In 2:10 under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul says:

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

The believer's position means he or she is the recipient of God's richness and fullness of blessing.



This theme is illustrated by the following pull quotes: “*The riches of God’s grace*” (1:7); “*The unsearchable riches of Christ*” (3:8); and “*The riches of His glory*” (3:16). Furthermore and accordingly, Paul encourages believers to, “*be filled up to all the fullness of God*” (3:19); “*to attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.*” (4:13); to be “*filled with the Spirit*” (5:18). These inuring riches of Christ to the believer are based on His grace (1:2,6,7; 2:7); His peace (1:2); His will (1:5); His pleasure and purpose (1:9); His glory (1:12,14); His calling and inheritance (1:18); His power and strength (1:19, 6:10); His love (2:4), His workmanship (2:10), His Holy Spirit (3:16), His offering and sacrifice (5:2), and His armor (6:11,13). Again, the words, “*grace, riches, glory, fullness, filled*” and “*in Christ*” are key words that depict the flavor, direction and emphasis of the letter as they repeatedly appear numerous times throughout the letter.

B. THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH AGE

The biblical word for “mystery” in Greek, *mysterion*, means “unrevealed truth.” It appears six times in the letter. The Church Age was a mystery in the Old Testament (cf. 3:5, 9); this epistle clearly spells out and reveals this mystery. Allow me to utilize a California geographical feature as a metaphor to illustrate the point: Paul reveals in Ephesians that the Old Testament (OT) saint was akin to a tourist visiting Sequoia National Park on the west side of the Sierra Nevada. If he or she were to look to the east, they may catch a glimpse of the far-away grand summit of Mount Whitney. What they can in no way see from their vantage point is the vast Kern River Valley that lies between. Similarly, the OT saint looked from his perch of OT truths for his coming Messiah—not realizing the Church Age lay between the consummation of God’s Kingdom on earth. This is what Paul is referring to relative to the context of his duty as a preacher in Ephesians 3:9:

“... and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things.”

Prior to the OT believer experiencing the Messianic Kingdom, in Ephesians Paul explicitly

states that before then exists the Church Age in which the Gentiles will be grafted-in (cf. 3:6) to share in His eventual earthly and then heavenly Kingdom.

C. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CHURCH

In Christ’s resurrected and ascended absence, God the Father has sent the Holy Spirit to empower the Church to be Christ’s present spiritual body on the earth. The Church consists of God’s called-out individuals who are truly saved, as evidenced by their trusting in Christ for salvation (2:8–9). The Church properly understood is not an organization, but a living organism composed of men and women who know Christ as Savior and Lord and are mutually interdependent through the use and practice of each member’s unique but limited spiritual gifts which are bestowed on them by the Holy Spirit at the time of salvation.

Additionally, Ephesians 4:11–12 states that God gave pastor-teachers to His body in His absence in order to coach and mature His team to maturity.

IV. CHALLENGING PASSAGES

This book is a benchmark on one of the aspects of the doctrine of Salvation: Predestination. There is no way around it. At the same time, it does not support hyper-Calvinism in that 1:13 states:

“In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.”

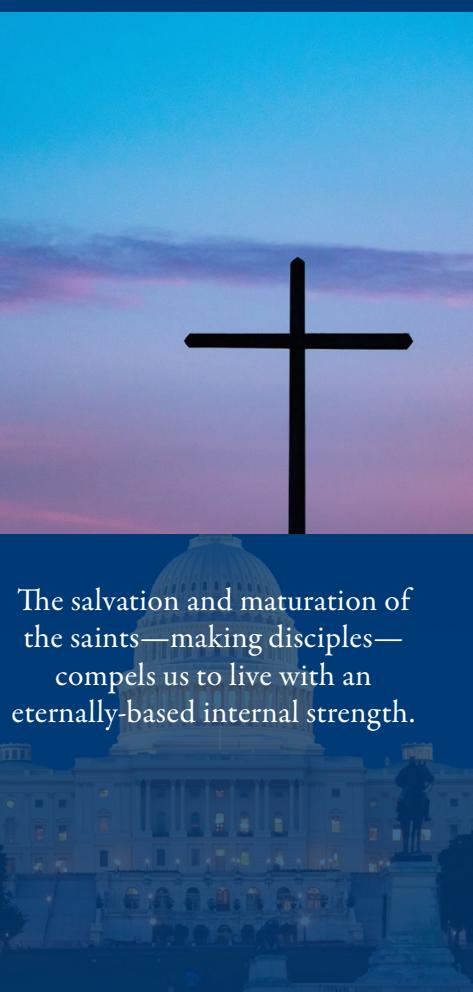
The most challenging passage therefore is 2:8–9. Specifically, what does the phrase, “*and that not of yourselves*” relate to? I believe it relates to both grace and faith. Each is a gift from God that somehow comes to bear on human will without violating its existence (evident in 1:13 above and Genesis 3:6, 17). One chooses—via the grace and faith given to them by God—to trust in Christ.

Predestination and human will, both elements here apparent in salvation, as seen in this epistle, are antinomies (*Merriam-Webster*: “Opposition of one law or rule to another law or rule: contra-

VERSE OF THE WEEK

Ephesians 3:16–19

“... be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.”



The salvation and maturation of the saints—making disciples—compels us to live with an eternally-based internal strength.



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Books of the Bible: Ephesians

diction within a law") to the finite human mind (cf. Deuteronomy 29:29; I Corinthians 13:12) but not to the infinite omniscient understanding of the One who here penned them.

Ephesians is remarkable and profound! It is chalked full of life-transforming truths that can revolutionize one's life. It is a book worthy of diligent study.

V. APPLICATION TO GOVERNING AUTHORITIES

A. TO THE PERSON

As a believer, this epistle states that you are a member of the Body of Christ—and should identify with other believers. Not only in your home district, but wherein He has called you to be a missionary—on the Hill! It is incongruous and dangerous for believers to come to DC week-in and week-out and shun involvement with other believers. Such behavior runs counter to the thesis of this book (cf. 4:7–16).

Furthermore, God designed His body to be led by the ones He gave (4:11) between His first and second advent in order to equip you relative to your ultimate spiritual calling. These spiritual coaches (pastor-teachers) are assigned the responsibility by God of helping other call-out ones to mature in Christ. It makes no sense for believers to duck-out from Bible studies and Bible teachers when on the Hill—not only is D.C. where you have been sent to minister, but it is where you live over half the year! Make good use of the Bible teachers and studies He has provided while away from home! “Several logs burn brightly together; place one by itself on a cold hearth and it soon goes out.”

B. TO THE POSITION

In the “how you ought to walk” section of the book (Chapters 4–6), 5:17 introduces a subsection on how you ought to walk in wisdom (wisdom: “The skill at living life for God’s glory”). This is the context in which Paul lists three separate authority-submission relationships: The husband to wife (5:22–33); The parents to the children (6:1–4); and The employer to the employee (6:5–9). These are what the apostle Peter terms as institutions, in Greek, *anthropinos ktisis*, (Lit: “for man created”) in 1 Peter 2:13. (Peter lists the institutions of civil government, commerce, and marriage [2:13–3:7]).

Scripture speaks of five separate institutions in all (the additional one being the Church [cf. 1 Timothy 3:15]). These are God’s ordained authority-submission structures that need exist now, prior to His coming earthly, perfect rule. These are structures that are necessary in a fallen world. Accordingly, the governing authority need defend and fight for their unencumbered existence in his or her policy positions. It is fair to say that Ephesians implies that any country void of these functional institutions will only accelerate in terms of its internal degradation. It is therefore critically important to represent on the Hill these institutions as specifically defined by Scripture.

May God bless your life as you work to master Ephesians in the days and years ahead! cm

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