

A Study of Paul's letter
To the Ephesians

A shared invitation and a call to join the Fellowship class in the start of a new study.

Ephesians, A message for our times

We live in a time of great evil, honestly evil has always been present. In times such as these our attention has been sharpened; our eyes are more focused on the presence of evil. A covering has been pulled back; the creature has crawled from the darkness exclaiming "look at me. I am still here, and it is safe to join others in choosing me." Evil divides, Christ unites.

Evil is the nature of this world Evil is the antithesis of the nature and heart of God. . Our lives are placed into the midst of evil and we are charged with the journey of navigating and rising above evil joining with Christ exposing and glorifying the nature of our holy creator. Our creator possesses a boundless love for his creation and has provided a light through the darkness with a promise of salvation. The light is found in His Son, and in him is life and the life is the light of men. The light shines through the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. The light is found in His word.

Paul's letter to the Ephesians was written for times such as these. The church in Ephesus was present in a world like the one we experience today. Ephesians is a message to the church of assurance, a message of unity and a call to faithfulness.

Regardless of your choice to join us in this Bible study,

In times such as these,

This is a time to Read Gods word daily, pray and meditate, utilizing the one thing we do have control over, our time. This is a time to intentionally spend time with God filling ourselves with his presence. This is a time to open ourselves asking God where he can use us. Realizing God has a plan for our life. and has been equipping us our whole life for his plan.

We are called to live faithfullyin times such as these.

If you are not already participating in a Sunday morning Bible study we invite you to join us.

A Study of Paul's letter To the Ephesians

Text: Ephesians For You ~ Richard Coekin

Notice the book cover.

1. This book is for you to READ, understand God's plan for plan and your place in it.
2. This is for you to FEED, helping you mediate on God's word day by day.
3. This is for you to LEAD, equipping you to teach the Bible to others.

As we go through this study we will be called to keep these words in the forefront of our study.

Introduction:

The Structure and Message of Ephesians *Pages 9-10*

1. Paul's letter to the Ephesians is divided into two sections of three chapters each.
 - Chapters 1-3 focus on Gospel doctrine proclaiming God's plan to unite everything under Christ.
 - Chapters 4-6 focus on church practice calling us to preserve our unity under Christ.
2. There are five distinctive emphasis and phrases in Ephesians that reflect Paul's message.
 - a. The problem of sin and judgement, and its remedy in Christ
 - b. Presenting the Gospel as the "mystery" of God previously hidden but now revealed.
 - c. The heavenly realms are the spiritual and eternal dimensions which Christ has already been resurrected and enthroned in glory.
 - d. The local church is not just a useful vehicle for collecting disciples, but a heavenly gathering. The body, building, and bride of Christ.
 - e. All our blessings are "in Christ"; he is our means for blessing, the One we live in, united to in faith sharing in his resurrection victory over evil, sin, and death.

The Message

The message of Ephesians is that God's eternal plan is to "bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ" who is already raised in triumph to rule over all evil powers for the safety of the church.

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Background:¹

The Writer and His Readers

Paul is writing this letter during his imprisonment in Rome. Paul introduces himself in chapter 1 verse 1 as an apostle of Jesus Christ by will of God.

Consider that introduction. God wills apostles of Jesus Christ. Calling and empowering them.

Consider the implication. This letter is presented as God's revelation. Therefore it is all true; it speaks with authority.

The Church at Ephesus

Ephesus was a political and commercial center of a large prosperous region. Ephesus was a large port city becoming the chief communication and commercial link between Rome and the East. Merchants flocked to this city making it a melting pot of nations and ethnic groups. Greek, Roman, Jew and Gentile mingled freely in the streets.

Ephesus boasted the largest open-air theaters; it held twenty-five thousand spectators. There was a stadium for chariot races and fights with animals. Chiefly, however, Ephesus boasted of its great temple to Diana or Artemis. It was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The temple was a depository of huge amounts of treasure and was in effect the bank of Asia. It was served by hundreds of priestesses of Diana, who were temple prostitutes.

This is the city the apostle Paul came to preach. In this city God was pleased to establish a faithful church. To the Christians of this city, attempting to live for God in the midst of utter paganism, the apostle directs this letter.

- 1. Can we relate to this setting. Could this setting be anyone of the major commercial hubs in our country or world today?*
- 2. Do we see ourselves in the lifestyle of the Ephesian culture?*
- 3. Do we feel ourselves in the Christian church planted in Ephesus?*

¹ Ephesians an expositional commentary by James M. Boice pages 2-7

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The People of Ephesus

The second part of verse 1. "To the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus." This phrase contains three definitions of believers.

1. Christians are saints.
 - a. In the Bible to be a saint means to be set a part.
 - b. Every Christian is a saint and every saint is a Christian.
 - c. Being a saint does not primarily refer to being a good person, all saints will nevertheless be better than they would otherwise have been and will in increasing measures develop and show forth the character of Christ.
2. Christians are faithful.
 - a. Paul has two ideas in calling the believers in Ephesus faithful.
 - i. Exercising faith
 - ii. Faith has three elements.
 1. The content is proclaimed and understood.
 2. There is an emotional element. Once understood it cannot be ignored. It draws forth a loving response to God.
 3. There is a volitional element. Having perceived and understood the gospel and having been affected by it, the true Christian now makes a personal commitment to Christ who died for him.
3. Christians are in Christ.
 - a. This phrase means more than just believing on Christ or being saved by his atonement. The phrase means being joined to Christ in one spiritual body so that what is true to him is true for us.

Grace Abounding

The last words of Paul's words are "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The faithful Christians of Ephesus were in the world and were obliged to live there. In the same way we must live in Christ in our cities, wherever God has placed us. We share the same culture of a city like Ephesus, commercial materialistic. A culture that was pagan in its faith, preoccupied sex and superstitions. What can keep Christian people faithful to God in such environments? What can enable them to be saintly continually? Paul has one answer grace and peace, and particularly grace from the father. As the book goes on we will learn *what* we should be in this world. But from the very beginning there is no mystery about *how* we are to be it –by the will and the strength of God, who alone can help us. We have no other strength, but by grace.