

Ephesians: Chosen by Grace

Book Introduction:

Klyne Snodgrass in his commentary on Ephesians states that: "Pound for pound" it may well be the most influential document ever written. Within the history of Christianity, only the Psalms, the Gospel of John, and Romans have been so instrumental in shaping the life and thought of Christians...."

He goes on to say, "This letter is the most contemporary book in the Bible. Apart from a few terms and the treatment of slavery, Ephesians could have been written to a modern church. It describes human beings, their predicament, sin, and delusion, but much more it describes God's reaching out to people to recreate and transform them into a new society. It describes the power God's Spirit gives for living. It shows who we really are without Christ and who we become both individually and corporately with Christ."

1st 3 Chapters – deals with Grace that God has given to us through Christ – lots of doctrine relating to how grace works in relation to our salvation and our ongoing journey as Christ followers.

Last 3 Chapters – very practical and deal primarily with the Christian life, though grace is still the overall theme

Grace – unmerited love and blessing from God on us as ill-deserving sinners.

- Unmerited – have not earned it
- Ill-deserving – apart from Christ we are enemies of God. Not just strangers.
- EPH 2:4 "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved."

Ephesians is full of encouragement, hope and instruction

Authorship and Initial Audience:

- some commentators have debated who wrote this letter,
- some suggest that it was not Paul, but rather a contemporary of Paul who copied Colossians, since the two letters are strikingly similar.
- However, there isn't any biblical evidence to suggest that anyone other than Paul wrote it
- Most scholars agree that it was intended for the Ephesians, though many think it was also a circular letter that was passed around between all the other churches in the Asia Minor area.

Written by Paul as a prisoner in Rome around AD60

Unlike Colossians where he had never visited, Paul had very strong personal ties to Ephesus

- Paul spent a little over 2 years in Ephesus as seen in Acts

- **Acts 19:1-10** "And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. 2 And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." 3 And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism." 4 And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." 5 On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. 7 There were about twelve men in all.

8 And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. 9 But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the **hall of Tyrannus**. 10 This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

- Hall (school) of Tyrannus – most likely Paul had to rent this space. It was a large space suitable to hold a larger crowd.

Location:

- Located on what is today the western tip of Turkey
- RC Sproul says, "The book of Revelation speaks of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodecia. These seven cities were arranged around the urban hub of the province with Ephesus occupying a strategic point.... Ephesus itself was the gateway to Asia. It was at the mouth of the important Cayster River [which flowed into the Aegean Sea]. Waterways were crucial links of transportation and commerce before the advent of mechanized travel. A highway to Ephesus also served as a hub for caravan travel. In ancient history the Greeks and the Romans both vied for control of Ephesus because of its strategic military and commercial location.... Ephesus was famous for its great temple, a shrine to the goddess Diana (or Artemis in the Greek). The temple Diana was one of the 7 wonders of the world. It was 425 feet in length. [That's almost one and a half football fields]. Its width was 220 feet. Its chief attraction however was an image of Diana said to have fallen directly from heaven to earth. The temple was so popular among pagans that Ephesus emerged as the religious center of all Asia."

Opposition to the Gospel:

- Ephesus made a lot of money on the worship of Diana
- People meet Jesus and don't want to worship pagan idols anymore.
- Paul met a lot of opposition because he was disturbing the cultural and commercial equilibrium
- **Acts 19:23-34** - 23 About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way. 24 For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. 25 These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. 26 And you see and hear

that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. 27 And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship.”

28 When they heard this they were enraged and were crying out, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” 29 So the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's companions in travel. 30 But when Paul wished to go in among the crowd, the disciples would not let him. 31 And even some of the Asiarchs, who were friends of his, sent to him and were urging him not to venture into the theater. 32 Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. 33 Some of the crowd prompted Alexander, whom the Jews had put forward. And Alexander, motioning with his hand, wanted to make a defense to the crowd. 34 But when they recognized that he was a Jew, for about two hours they all cried out with one voice, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”

Ephesus has since been excavated as well as the temple of Diana. There’s nothing but ruins there today.

Those ruins are a monument to the greatness of our God.