

A LOOK AT THE BOOK EPHESIANS WALK IN UNITY

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AUTHOR AND DATE

Pauline authorship is thoroughly supported by external evidence as well as internal testimony.

The letter was written from Rome after the 3rd missionary journey while Paul was in prison there in about A.D. 60.

The destination of the letter is less certain because of strong external evidence that "in Ephesus" was not found in the original manuscript.

Thus it may be that the letter was a circular letter directed to the churches of the area around Ephesus in Asia Minor.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The situation is parallel to that of Philippians and Colossians which were probably carried by the same person.

Paul had been arrested in Jerusalem because of the complaint of the Jews against him. 3:1, 13; 4:1; 6:20

Their main complaint was that he was preaching that God had turned from them to the Gentiles.

In the delay over the proceedings and the threats to his life, Paul appealed to Caesar and was sent to Rome.

He waited there for two years for the arrival of his accusers.

They apparently never arrived and Paul was released.

While waiting in Rome, Paul wrote to these churches (about A.D. 60).

He had visited some of these towns on his second missionary journey.

Apparently he founded churches in them on the third journey.

He invested considerable time there on the third journey.

Some of the churches of that region were daughter churches of the church in Ephesus.

Paul had never visited those churches personally.

PURPOSE AND THEME

Two main purposes are apparent in the book.

1. There are some things Paul wants us *to KNOW*.

He wants us to know *what a great job God has done in our lives.*

What does he say God did?

1:3 1:18-20a 3:17b-19 3:20-21

Paul informs the readers of God's work in our lives and of the direction of God's program in the present age.

This purpose centers especially on the doctrine of the church and how God has made us all one in Christ, whether Jew or pagan in background (1-3).

2. There are some things Paul wants us *to DO.*

What does he want us to DO?

4:1 *He wants us to LIVE LIKE IT!*

4:2-3 5:21

He wants us to *WALK WORTHY* of what God has done in our lives.

Paul exhorts us to conduct ourselves in a manner which is appropriate in view of that program (4-6).

Although it is difficult to determine which purpose is primary in Paul's thought, apparently Paul has received word of divisions within the churches.

The underlying problems seem to be similar to those found in other churches.

The divisions may revolve around conflicts between Jews and Gentiles, especially.

Paul writes them concerning God's program for the church in this age, in order to correct the problem.

If God has eliminated the basis for distinctions within the church, we ought to live in a way that reflects what God has done.

The content of the book is presented as a hymn of praise because those who were once separated have now been made members of God's family.

***If God has accepted all of us without distinction,
we ought to accept one another in the same way.***

ORGANIZATION

As noted above, the book divides into two parts.

The first half deals with the **DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH 1-3**

The second half with the **PRACTICAL DAILY CONDUCT OF HIS PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH 4-6:9**

A postscript advises the readers concerning the spiritual warfare in which we are involved and warns them to prepare for it by using all the armor God has provided. 6:10-24

ARGUMENT

GREETING 1:1-2

PRAYER: PRAISE FOR OUR CALLING IN CHRIST 1:3-3:20

After the initial greeting, Paul expresses his prayer for the church.

The lengthy prayer of praise to God presents a summary of God's plan for His people in the present age.

He uses a prayer of thanksgiving format to teach the doctrine of the church.

PRAISE FOR GOD'S PLAN 1:3-14

Paul praises God for His marvelous plan through which He has made it possible for us to receive every spiritual blessing in Christ.

The ultimate purpose of this plan is that God might receive glory and praise for what He has done.

The development of this section of praise summarizes the role of each Person of the Godhead in providing every spiritual blessing for us.

The work of the Father 1:3-6

Paul praises the Father because of His plan in general, and specifically, because He chose us before the foundation of the world.

As Paul describes the role of the Son and Spirit, they are presented as agents through whom the Father accomplished His plan.

This order does not diminish their divinity.

It merely recognizes the Father's function as head over the program.

His work through the Son 1:7-12

Praise is presented to God because of His work through the Son.

By this work, God has provided us with redemption and with forgiveness of our sins.

We were also chosen to become the inheritance of God.

His work through the Spirit 1:13-14

Praise is given to God because of His work through the Spirit, by which we are guaranteed that we will receive our inheritance.

PRAISE FOR OUR PART IN GOD'S PLAN 1:15-3:13

Paul praises God because *THEY (WE)* have been included in His plan.

For their faith and love 1:15-23

His thanksgiving 1:15-16a

He thanks God for them because of the evidence of their faith and love.

His petition 1:16b-23

His thanksgiving is accompanied by the prayer that we might know Him better and understand the greatness of the power of God which made this plan possible.

A full and true understanding of the greatness of what God has done in us will eliminate any basis for pride or divisions.

For the change in their life 2:1-22

He thanks God also for the change He has accomplished in our lives.

Life given by grace 2:1-10

By His grace we have been given life.

Our former dead condition 2:1-3

We were formerly dead in sins.

Our present live condition 2:4-6

In spite of our condition, God gave us life.

He raised us and gave us a new position, seated together with Christ.

God's purpose 2:7-10

He did this in order to show the greatness of His love and grace.

Former condition 2:11-12

Paul returns again to what we were, to demonstrate in greater detail the change which God produced in us.

Previously we were distinguished by the lack of all the proper credentials to qualify for God's program.

Present condition 2:13-22

Now, in Christ, we have been drawn near to God by the blood of Christ.

He has removed the barriers and made peace possible.

Therefore, instead of being separated outsiders, we are fellow citizens and members of God's family.

The far off brought near 2:13

The two made into one 2:14

The barrier removed 2:14-16

The peace announced 2:17-22

For his ministry with them 3:1-13

Besides his thanksgiving for us and our part in God's program, Paul is also grateful for the privilege of ministering to us.

The nature of his ministry 3:1-7

It had not been previously understood that God would send the gospel to *pagans* to make *us* members of one body with Israel.

The grace which he received 3:8-13

Paul was given the privilege of announcing the riches of Christ which had been provided for pagans.

His was a significant role in God's program and he praised God for allowing him to have this part.

PETITION 3:14-21

For our comprehension of God's plan 3:14-19

Paul concludes his prayer with the petition that God would enable us to understand the dimensions of His love as reflected in His plan.

When we truly understand the implications of all that God has done for us, we won't have any basis to maintain our puny distinctions and divisions.

For God's glory through His plan 3:20-21

The final result Paul wants to see is God glorified, both through the church and through the work of Christ.

APPLICATION: WALK WORTHY OF OUR CALLING 4:1-6:9

The second half of the letter presents the logical implications that should result from the doctrine presented in the first half.

When the church fully comprehends the greatness of God's plan, we will glorify Him and live as Paul prays that we will *-IN UNITY*.

The structure of the practical application section of the letter is marked by the parallel phrase "*therefore walk*."

Each recurrence of the phrase indicates a logical result of the doctrinal premises of the first section of the book.

WALK IN UNITY 4:1-16

The first, and most significant, implication of what God has provided in His plan is that we should walk in unity.

When we understand properly what God has done for us, we will quit criticizing others (4:1).

The unity in the body of Christ 4:1-6

Paul demonstrates that by God's design, the church has unity.

The diversity in the body of Christ 4:7-11

Within that unity there is a diversity of functions.

When Christ defeated the enemy, He returned from the battle to distribute the spoils.

The spoils are the gifts of the Spirit.

The unity of purpose in the diversity 4:12-16

The gifts are diverse in character, but they all function together to accomplish the same purpose, the building up of the whole body.

Therefore, no one should boast or criticize.

Each one has received what he has because of God's grace.

God deserves any credit given.

DON'T WALK LIKE PAGANS 4:17-32

The second implication of the change God has accomplished by His grace is that we should no longer walk the same way as we used to walk.

Life among the pagans 4:17-19

When we lived in darkness and futility among the pagans, we could live like the others.

Life in Christ 4:20-32

New clothes for the new man 4:20-24

However, now that we are in Christ, we ought to live a different quality lifestyle.

Fitting conduct for the new man 4:25-32

Paul presents some specific areas where our lives should be different. These are specific kinds of conduct that should affect our relationships with one another.

Speaking truthfully instead of lying 4:25

Settling anger instead of holding grudges 4:26-27

Rather than remain angry and bear grudges, we should deal with our anger and resolve conflict before Satan is able to use it to harm us.

Sharing by working instead of stealing 4:28

Stealing is both a biblically defined sin and an offense against another person.

Rather than steal and harm one another, we should go to work so that we'll have something to share with others when they need it.

Building up instead of tearing down 4:29-32

Finally, we should watch the way we use our lips in general.

Our conversation should be wholesome and edifying, rather than destructive.

Our mouths should not be used to criticize and attack others, but to be kind and to forgive others.

WALK IN LOVE 5:1-2

These latter characteristics of the proper use of the tongue lead to the third general implication of God's great plan.

If God has so loved us, we ought to imitate Him and love one another.

WALK IN HOLINESS 5:3-14

The fourth implication of what God has done for us is that we should walk in the light.

This implication deals with the general characteristic of holiness.

The preceding contrast with pagans dealt mainly with our attitude toward others.

This implication contrasts the immorality and ungodliness of those without God.

Prohibition of participation 5:3-7

We should not have anything to do with the lifestyle of this world.

Light in the midst of darkness 5:8-14

Our lifestyle should serve as a light in the midst of darkness to expose the true nature of men's deeds to those around us.

We should be channels to bring others to the light in Christ.

DON'T WALK AS FOOLISH BUT AS WISE 5:15-6:9

Finally, Paul urges us to walk as wise, understanding people, rather than as foolish people.

Three pairs of contrasts presented: 15-16, 17, 18

Living as wise rather than foolish 5:15-17

Wise men make the most of their time because they understand what the right priorities are for their lives.

In this case, they know the character of the times they live in.

They also understand what God wants from us, and they do it.

Controlled by the Spirit rather than by wine 5:18-6:9

A specific revelation of a wise person is the recognition of the harm wine can cause and the good God's control can bring.

If we want a truly valuable, memorable experience, we should let God control our lives.

The control of the Spirit will be accompanied by several characteristics which will give evidence of His control:

Praising God in fellowship with others 5:18-19a

We'll praise God when we're together, rather than complain and criticize.

Praising God in our own heart 5:19b

Our personal attitudes also reflect His control.

Rather than be angry and critical, we will have songs of praise in our hearts (19b), and be thankful continually for everything (20).

Giving thanks for everything 5:20

Submitting to one another 5:21-6:9

Principle presented 5:21

Especially significant for a church characterized by divisions, when the Spirit controls our lives, we will submit to one another.

Our mutual submission will be evidenced in our relationship between wives and husbands (5:22-33), between children and parents (6:1-4), and between slaves and masters (6:5-9).

Application for wives and husbands 5:22-33
Application for children and parents 6:1-4
Application for slaves and masters 6:5-9

An order of authority is recognized in each sphere but the attitude of mutual submission is demonstrated in the use of that authority.

POSTSCRIPT: PREPARATION FOR SPIRITUAL BATTLE 6:10-20

An alert is added to the end of the letter.

We're in a spiritual battle.

Therefore, we must be prepared and put on the armor God has prepared for us.

Preparation for the battle 6:10-13

The enemy is not a physical enemy.

Therefore, our weapons aren't physical, they're spiritual.

Armor for the battle 6:14-20

We should put on the complete armor God has provided to endure and stand firm against the enemy.

PERSONAL NOTES AND BENEDICTION 6:21-24

Paul concludes the letter with a personal note.

Tychicus has brought them the letter.

He will inform them of Paul's personal situation (6:21-22)

He then sends a closing prayer that we might experience God's peace, love and faith (6:23-24).