

EPHESIANS 3

Author: Paul

Theme: The Church, Christ's Body

Date of writing: ca. AD 60.

THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS, written in Rome, the first of the prison epistles (Acts 20-27; see Acts 28:30), was carried by Tychicus, concurrently with Colossians and Philemon. Ephesians is the most impersonal of Paul's letters and prob. meant as circular letter to churches of the region.

The doctrine of the Epistle confirms this view. The Church here is the true Church, "His body," not the local church, as in Philippians, Corinthians, etc. Essentially, three lines of truth make up this Epistle:

- (1) The Christian's exalted position through grace;
- (2) The truth concerning the body of Christ; and
- (3) A life lived in accordance with that position.

There is a close spiritual relationship between Ephesians and Joshua. In both there is conflict, often failure, but also victory, rest, and possession. The number seven is conspicuous in the structure of Ephesians.

The Epistle may be divided as follows:

Introduction, 1:1 - 2.

I. The Believer's Standing in Grace, 1:3 - 3:21.

II. The Walk and Service of the Believer, 4:1 - 5:17.

III. The Walk & Warfare of the Spirit-filled Believer, 5:18-6:20.

Conclusion, 6:21 - 24.

v. 1 "A prisoner" of Rome, yet seen by himself as a prisoner of CHRIST! The irons of the Roman prison did not constrain him, but the love of Jesus Christ. Perspective is EVERYTHING! Are you a VICTIM, or more than conquerors through Christ? Prisoners of Rome? Or Christ?

1. I am what I am because of Jesus Christ; I am what I am for Jesus Christ.
2. A man can only say this who has said, "And when Christ who is my life."
3. The life that is totally committed is one that sees everything in the light of Jesus Christ.
 - a. Nothing happens to me except it be allowed by Jesus Christ.
 - b. If He has allowed it then He has allowed it for some good purpose.
 - c. Thus I will not question or complain concerning my lot for my Lord is working out His good pleasure in my life.
4. My pleasure comes in pleasing my Lord, He is pleased when I place my trust fully in His wisdom and purpose for my life.
 - a. If my pleasure is in my lot in life, then at times I might be very pleased, and at other times very distraught.
 - b. How wonderful when we can say with David, "*I delight to do Thy will, O Lord.*"
 - c. Jesus said, "*I do always those things that please Him.*" He could thus say to the Father, "*I have finished the work you gave Me to do.*" His life was that of total fulfillment because His was a life of total surrender.
 - d. You will never find total fulfillment living for yourself.
 - e. The self-centered life is doomed for disappointment and ultimate emptiness.

v. 2 "Administration" (Greek, *oiko-nomian*; pronounced oi-KONO-mian; lit, "house law;" stewardship; administration. KJV, "dispensations" – where we get our word *economy* and *economics* from!) -- i.e., seven

disp.: d. of innocence, d. of conscience, d. of human gov't., law, d. of promise, d. of Law, etc. All man-made. Others are covenantal theologians, where everything is seen as a part of one covenant (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David) or another...

"**Grace**" -- There is still a great admixture of the grace and Law in the church today; freedom vs. legalism. They mix like water/oil or better, clay/iron (Dan. 2). Paul was constantly opposing the legalistic Judaizers of his day...and they are still with us today.

1. There are many who think that they are made righteous and acceptable before God by their good works.
 - a. Many churches and groups push this concept and idea.
 - b. The Catholic Church places a strong emphasis upon works, traditions and dogma.
 - c. The holiness churches also have a strong emphasis upon a righteous standing before God through works.
2. Paul told the Galatians that if righteousness could come through the law, then Christ died in vain.
3. He encouraged the Corinthians not to receive the grace of God in vain.

GAL 5:4 "You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace."

v. 3 Back in ch. 1 about the "**mystery**" (define!)-- Eph 1:7-10 "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment--to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ."

v. 5 Not seen in the OT; they thought the arrival of Messiah would bring in the Kingdom Age immediately; didn't see the Church Age, this age of grace. Didn't completely understand always; rule and reign vs. despised and rejected, sorrow, grief, pierced, etc. (Isa. 53).

Disciples: "Are you now going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" No -- an age of grace to draw out a Body amongst the Gentiles...it offended the Jews, which is why they persecuted Paul.

v. 6 That Gentiles were to be saved was no mystery. The mystery "**hidden in God**" was the divine purpose to make of Jew and Gentile a whole new creation -- "the Church, which is his [Christ's] Body," formed by the baptism with the Holy Spirit and in which the earthly distinction of Jew and Gentile disappears. The revelation of this "**mystery**" of the Church was foretold but not explained by Christ (Mat 16:18). The details concerning the doctrine, position, walk, and destiny of the Church were committed to Paul and his fellow "**apostles and prophets**" by the Spirit (Eph 3:5).

v. 7 What is a minister (*diakonos*)? (from *diá*, "through" or "thoroughly" and *konis*, "dust") -- properly, "to thoroughly raise up dust by moving in a hurry, and so to minister; 'to kick up dust,' as one running an errand." (Diákonos) is the root of the English terms, "diaconate, deacon." The Greek term for the minister who manages the local congregation is *overseer*; the Latin term "pastor" means *shepherd*. "Reverend" means "greatly to be feared!"

A. Many false concepts of what a minister is, and what the ministry is.

1. Most ministers entertain these false concepts, and help to foster them.
2. The ministry is not a profession to be chosen by idealistic young men; it is a calling of God.
3. To be a minister does not mean that you have some right to rule over people or have authority.
 - a. Much damage done to people's lives through the "Shepherding" doctrine.
 - b. Being a minister does not put you on a higher level than others, making you closer to God.
4. To be a minister does not mean that people have to cater to you.
5. Being a minister does not give you an immunity from normal temptations and sin.
 - a. A minister can sin just as easily as any one else.

b. It does bring you into greater judgment than others for your sin.

1. *"Be not many teachers, knowing that you will receive the greater judgment."*
2. James 3:2 *"To whom much is given, much shall be required."*

B. A minister is a servant (*diákonos*) – to be busy serving YOU, not the denomination, or self, or ego; I'm not the BOSS; I'm the chief servant!

v. 8 Notice Paul's humility, unlike many who strut about the stage and come across proud, loud and arrogant!

"Unsearchable riches" -- cf. 1 Cor 2:9 *"...as it is written: 'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him'"*—to track out the untrackable riches of Christ; "to boldly go where no man has gone before..." kind of thought!

v. 9 With the eyes of the heart enlightened (Eph. 1:18), one can then turn the light for others to see!

v. 10 **"Manifold"** wisdom of God – highly variegated, multi-colored!

Angels are not omniscient; cf. 1 Pet 1:12 *"It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things."*

Cf. Eph. 1:19-21 *"That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come."*

We have access to God, unlike Israel.

v. 12 This is how we were saved, in a nutshell. We are (now) **"in HIM."** We rec'd. Him by FAITH! **"Freedom"** in the Holy Spirit with the Word of God guiding the practice of our faith.

v. 15 The Greek for *family* (*patria*) is derived from the Greek for *father* (*pater*).

v. 16 The world measures riches by what one has available to him through his bank account. The Bible measures riches by what we have available to us through Jesus Christ.

James 2:5 *"Listen, my beloved brethren, has not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to them that love him?"*

One of our greatest needs is more strength in the inner man. The world tends to obsess with the OUTER (visible, fleshly) man and his appearance.

A. I do not have the strength to stand against the pressures in myself. I need the power of the Spirit to stand against the forces of darkness.

1. It is the reason why the well-financed and promoted drug abuse program of the Fed. Gov't., the "Just say No!" program is not working; that is the heart of the problem, they do not have the power to say no.

B. I look at all of the health clubs, today the many gyms where the whole purpose is to get into shape.

1. I am reminded of the words of Paul to Timothy, *"Bodily exercise as a little profit, but godliness profits all things."*

2. If people would be as serious about developing their spiritual strength as they are their physical strength think of what could be accomplished for the kingdom of God!

v. 17 **"That you being rooted and grounded in love"**

A. That our roots go down deep in the love of Jesus Christ.

1. It is through the roots that the tree draws its source for life. Moisture and nourishment are drawn from the soil by the roots.

- a. Nourished in the love of Jesus.
- 2. The roots anchor the plant to the ground.
 - a. Otherwise the tree could never stand.
 - b. The plant would blow away.
- 3. We draw from the love of Jesus our life sustaining power and our stability.
- 4. In the next chapter he is going to talk about those who are carried about with every wind of doctrine.

Love is truly the foundation of Christianity.

- 1. Jesus said, *"By this shall men know that you are My disciples, that you love one another."*
 - 2. Without this love all my spiritual confessions and manifestations are meaningless.
 - 3. John tells us that it is not just verbalizing. There are many people who know the right things to say. They have the spiritual jargon down pat. The problem is that it is all words.
 - a. To hear some people talk, you would think that they are spiritual giants.
 - b. All talk, no walk.
 - c. John said, *"Let us not love in word or tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him."*
 - 4. The reality of your Christian faith is proved by your love.
 - a. *"We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren."*
- 1John 3:11 *"For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another."*

v. 18 Cf. Rom. 8:38-39 *"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*
