

BIBLE SURVEY - EPHESIANS

“For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”
Ephesians 2:8-10

Prison Epistle

The Epistle to the Ephesians is one of the Apostle Paul's prison Epistles. Along with Philippians, Colossians and Philemon, Ephesians was composed by Paul while under arrest (Acts 28:16-31) and awaiting trial in Rome (60-62AD).

Ephesus

The Church in Ephesus had been planted by Priscilla and Aquila. The Apostle Paul ministered to this congregation in Ephesus on his 3rd missionary journey. Ephesus was a major port city, a centre of commerce, finance and education. Its theatre could seat 24,000 and the town was dominated by an enormous pagan temple dedicated to the goddess Diana (*Artemis* in Greek). This temple was known as *“one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.”*

Idolatry Industry

A major industry of idol making had sprung up around this temple of Diana, producing idols which travellers purchased to set up in their homes. The preaching and teaching of Paul led many to destroy their idols and occultic books. *“Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them and it totalled fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the Word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.”* Acts 19:19-20

Riotous Commotion Whipped up Against Paul

As a result a great commotion arose about The Way and Demetrius, the silversmith who made silver shrines of Diana, called together other idol makers and declared: *“...Throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying they are not gods which are made with hands. So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship.’* Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out saying: *‘Great is Diana of the Ephesians!’* So the whole city was filled with confusion and rushed into the theatre with one accord...” Acts 19:26-29

Ephesus Addressed in Revelation

Both Pastoral Epistles, 1 and 2 Timothy, were addressed to Timothy in Ephesus and were about the Ephesian Church. In the Book of Revelation, the first of the seven Churches to be addressed was the church of Ephesus. *“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, ‘These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: ‘I know your works, your labour, your patience and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not and have found them liars and you have persevered and have patience and have laboured for My Name’s sake and have not become weary.’”* Revelation 2:1-3

The Queen of Epistles

To this exemplary church, which would later be the site of the Council of Ephesus (AD431), the Apostle Paul addresses this Epistle to all Christians. If Romans is the Kings of Epistles, then Ephesians can justly be described as the Queen of Epistles. It is a defence against syncretism, a clear exposition of Christian belief and behaviour.

Doctrine, Devotion and Duty

Ephesians deals with doctrine, devotion and duty. The first half of Ephesians, Chapters 1 to 3, deals with our **belief**. The last half, Ephesians 4 to 6, deals with our **behaviour**. In the first section the Apostle deals with our **relationship to God**: Doctrine and devotion, adoration, justification and worship. In the second section, the Apostle deals with our **relationship to others**: Duties, responsibilities, sanctification, our **walk**, our **work** and our **warfare**. The first half of the Book deals with what happens **inside the church** and the second half with what happens **outside the church**. The first half deals with the **vertical** dimension of the Gospel and the second half deals with the **horizontal** dimension of the Gospel.

Foundation for Reformation

Ephesians was, along with Romans, a foundational Book for the Protestant Reformation. In Ephesians, one clearly sees the **5 Solas of the Reformation**: **Scripture alone** is our ultimate authority, Salvation is by the **Grace of God alone**, received by **Faith alone**. **Christ alone** is the head of the Church. He is the only Mediator between God and man. Everything must be done **for the glory of God alone**. We also find the 5 points of Calvinism clearly enunciated in Ephesians: **Total Depravity**, **Unconditional Election**, **Limited Atonement**, **Irresistible Grace** and **Perseverance of the Saints**.

Total Depravity

In Ephesians we learn that outside of Christ, man is dead in his sins and completely incapable of saving himself. We are: “...**dead in trespasses and sins**, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the **sons of disobedience**, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves **in the lusts of our flesh**, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were **by nature children of wrath**...”
Ephesians 2:1-3

“That at that time you were **without Christ**, being **aliens from the commonwealth of Israel** and **strangers from the covenants of promise**, having **no hope** and **without God** in the world.”
Ephesians 2:12

“That we should no longer be children, **tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine**, by the **trickery of men**, in the **cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting**” Ephesians 4:14

“This I say, therefore and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, **in the futility of their mind**, having their **understanding darkened**, being **alienated from the life of God**, because of the **ignorance** that is in them, because of the **blindness of their heart**; who, **being past feeling**, have given themselves over to **lewdness**, to work all **uncleanness** with **greediness**. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows **corrupt according to the deceitful lusts** and be renewed in the spirit of your mind.”
Ephesians 4:17-23

Fruit of the Unregenerate

Ephesians describes the fruit of the unregenerate life: Lying, anger, theft, corrupt words, grieving the Holy Spirit, with bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour and evil speaking (4:25-31).

“But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and God. **Let no one deceive you with empty words**, for **because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience**. Therefore do not be partakers with them.” Ephesians 5:3-7

*“And have no fellowship with the **unfruitful works of darkness**, but rather expose them.”* Ephesians 5:11

Fruit of the Flesh

These are descriptions of men and women outside of Christ: The unregenerate engage in lying, stealing, corrupt communications, bitterness, evil speaking, malice, fornication, uncleanness and covetousness, filthiness, foolish talking and course jesting. They give themselves over to lewdness to work all uncleanness with greediness. They are consumed with deceitful lusts, ignorance and blindness of hearts, having their understanding darkened and alienated from the life of God. They are tossed to and fro with every fashion and fad and succumb to the trickery of men and the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting. The unregenerate are aliens from the people of God. Strangers' from the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God, in the world they are by nature children of wrath, sons of disobedience. We cannot save ourselves.

Unconditional Election

God chooses some people to be saved, not on account of any foreseen merit in them, but only because of His sovereign good pleasure. The longest sentence in the Bible is found in Ephesians 1:3-14: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as **He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved, in Him we have redemption through His Blood**, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven and which are on earth -in Him, in Him also we have obtained an inheritance, **being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will**, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory, in Him you also trusted, after you heard the Word of truth, the Gospel of your Salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”*

By Grace Through Faith

We did not find God, He found us. God was not lost. We are lost! It is not that we chose God. He chose us! He chose us before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption. *“**For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”* Ephesians 2:8-10

Created for Good Works

We are not saved by good works, but we are saved unto good works. Our righteousness is as filthy rags before our holy God. There is nothing we could do to make ourselves righteous before God, it is His grace, His undeserved favour that has provided our Redemption through His Blood. There is therefore absolutely no place for pride. Salvation is all of God. To Him alone belongs all the Glory.

What Comes First: Repentance or Regeneration?

The Bible makes it clear that Regeneration comes before Repentance. One of the first questions Dr. James Kennedy asked me was: *“What comes first: Repentance or Regeneration?”* My answer was *“Regeneration!”* *“Ah!”* he said, *“you must be a Calvinist!”*

God Alone Saves Sinners

God saves sinners. God alone. His mercy, His undeserved favour, is what saves sinners. Faith is the gift of God – lest any man boast. There is no room for pride. I did not find God. God was never lost! He found me. I was lost, dead in my trespasses and sins and by God's grace and mercy, He regenerated me by His sovereign will. From this work of grace, repentance and faith came into my life. Regeneration precedes Repentance and Faith. Salvation is all of God.

Amazing Grace

*“Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now I’m found, was blind but now I see.”*

All To Jesus I Surrender

We contribute nothing to our Salvation – except the sin that made it necessary. *“Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to Thy Cross I cling.”*

Limited Atonement

Also known as Definite Atonement or Particular Redemption means that *“Christ’s death actually paid for the sins”* of His elect people. ***“In Him we have Redemption through His Blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”*** Ephesians 1:7

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the Blood of Christ.” Ephesians 2:13

Irresistible Grace

“God effectively calls people and also gives them regeneration, both of which guarantee that we will respond in saving faith.” (Wayne Grudem) *“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, **even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)** and raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”* Ephesians 2:4-6

Perseverance of the Saints

Perseverance: those who are truly saved will be *“kept by God’s power and will persevere as Christians until the end of their lives.”* only those are true Christians. *“That you may know what is the hope...”* *“the eyes of your understanding[a] being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”* Ephesians 1:18-23

The Unsearchable Riches of Christ

In Ephesians, we read of *“the riches of His grace”* (1:7); *“the unsearchable riches of Christ”* (3:8); and *“the riches of His glory”* (3:16). The word riches is used 5 times in this letter. Grace is used 12 times, glory, 8 times. Fullness or filled, 6 times and the key phrase: *“in Christ”*, or *“In Him”*, 12 times.

Justification and Sanctification

From Ephesians 1 to 3 we read of our Justification. From Ephesians 4 through 6, we read of our Sanctification. Christian **belief** leads to Christian **behaviour**. Christian **doctrine** leads to Christian **duty**. Biblical **truth** requires Christian **integrity**. We do not have a religion, but a vibrant **relationship** with the one true Living God.

Unity in Christ

The Apostle who is described as “*the prisoner of the Lord*” and an “*ambassador in chains,*” emphasises the unity of Christ’s Church. “*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, **endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one Faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all.***” Ephesians 4:1-6

Redemption, Atonement and Adoption

There is no room for two people of God. There is no Salvation in Judaism. There is only one Saviour and that is our Lord Jesus Christ. It is only through His Blood Atonement on the Cross of Calvary that Jews and Gentiles, circumcised and uncircumcised, can find Redemption, Atonement and Adoption into the family of God. “*For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of separation... having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the Cross, thereby putting to death the enmity..*” Ephesians 2:14-16

Foundation and Cornerstone

The Church is built on the foundation of the Apostles and the Prophets and Christ Jesus Himself is the Chief Cornerstone (2:20).

Gifts to Build Up the Body

“*And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists and some pastors and teachers, **for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the Faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;** that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the Head – Christ - from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*” Ephesians 4:11-16

Many Members – One Body

The Church is not an organisation, but an organism. The Church is an *Ecclesia* – an assembly of called out ones. Just as a body has many organs and ligaments which are essential for the healthy carrying out of its duties, so too each one in the church, no matter what our gifts or calling, must work faithfully and effectively together for the growth and edification of the whole body.

Our High Calling

Leaders in the church are not meant to do all the work, they are meant to equip all the members for the work of ministry. The goal is for all those who name the Name of Christ to come to unity of the Faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to the full measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ himself. Christ Jesus left us an example that we should follow in His footsteps. Our example is Christ. Not any human leader. Every member must do their share and fulfil their duties for the Church to be healthy and effective in the fulfilment of the Great Commission.

Apostles

God gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists and some pastors and teachers. While some people today may have an apostolic church-planting ministry, none can claim to be Apostles with a capital “A” in the sense of the Apostles personally selected, trained and empowered by our Lord Jesus Christ during His ministry on earth. Those Apostles were eye-witnesses of the Resurrection of Christ and they are the foundation of the Church (2:20). Similarly, while some today

may have a prophetic ministry, there are no Prophets today with a capital “P” in the sense of the Prophets whom God used to produce the Books of the Old Covenant. Today prophetic ministry needs to be studying, teaching, expounding and applying the written Word of God as found in the Holy Scriptures – the Bible to all areas of life. **Scripture alone is our ultimate authority.**

Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers

Healthy churches need evangelists, pastors and teachers. The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing. Our highest priority is the fulfilment of the Great Commission of our Lord and Saviour, making disciples of all nations, teaching obedience to all things that the Lord has commanded.

Walking in the Spirit

The goal is to help Christians walk in **humility**, in **unity**, in **maturity**, in **integrity**, with **charity** and **love**, walking in **purity** and **mutual submission**, **responsibly**, walking in the **light**, **carefully**, walking **in the Spirit**. The first step in all of this, is to be *“renewed in the spirit of your mind”* (4:23).

Spiritual Warfare

The prince of the power of the air works in the sons of disobedience (2:2), producing children of wrath (2:3), who are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart (4:18-19), walking in the futility of their mind (4:17). Our priority is to speak the truth in love (4:15), ensuring that the sun never goes down on our wrath (4:26). We are to let no corrupt word proceed from our mouth (4:29), we are not to grieve the Holy Spirit (4:30). *“And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”* Ephesians 4:32

The Days are Evil

*“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, **redeeming the time**, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but **understand what the will of the Lord is**. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but **be filled with the Spirit**, speaking to one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, **giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.**”* Ephesians 5:15-21

Redeem the Time

We are living in evil times. We need to redeem the time. Some people say that time is money. Time is far more valuable than that! You may get more money, but you will never get more time. Every day, every hour is precious and we will not get another opportunity to live those precious days and hours. Therefore we need to understand what the will of the Lord is.

Be Filled with the Holy Spirit

The Scripture commands us not to be drunk with wine, but rather to be filled with the Holy Spirit. It is as much a sin to fail to be filled with the Spirit as it is to be drunk.

We Have a Reason to Sing

The fruit of the Spirit includes: a joyful heart, which shows itself in singing. Christianity is a uniquely singing religion. You do not find such singing in Hinduism, Buddhism or Islam. We have a reason to sing! We are to sing Psalms and Hymns and spiritual songs, making melody in our hearts to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father, in the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

A Treasury of Excellence

We have a tremendous treasury of worship in the Psalms and in the great Hymns of the Church. It is a tragedy that so many have neglected this great treasure store of Psalms and Hymns for shallow and superficial modern songs that lack the depth and substance of these great examples of excellence. People will be singing *Amazing Grace, And Can it Be, Jesus Shall Reign, A Mighty*

Fortress is our God and Handels Messiah for centuries to come. (It is questionable as to whether the next generation will even be bothering with much of the fashionable choruses of our day.)

Relationships

Our **belief** affects our **behaviour**. **Doctrine** determines **duty**. Ephesians 5:22 to 6:9 deal with our relationships: Wives are commanded to submit to their husbands as unto the Lord, just as the Church should be subject to Christ. Husbands are commanded to love their wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her. Children are commanded to obey and honour their parents. Fathers are instructed to not to provoke their children to wrath, but to bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. Servants are commanded to be obedient to their masters, with fear and trembling and in sincerity of heart as unto Christ, not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart. Masters are commanded to treat those who serve them kindly, knowing that their own Master is in Heaven. *“Masters treat your servants knowing that your own Master also is in Heaven and there is no partiality with Him.”* In a word, do to others as you would have them to do unto you.

Weapons for Our Warfare

Ephesians ends with instructions for warfare. The Christian **walk** and **work** ultimately is a call to **war**. We are involved in a colossal world war of worldviews. The battle for hearts and minds. A battle for the family. There is a clash of civilisations. Ultimately this is a spiritual war. *“Finally, my brethren, **be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and Blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness and having shod your feet with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of Faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of Salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints - and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”*** Ephesians 6:10-20

Be Armed, Armoured and Alert

Satan deceives, deludes, degrades, doubts, tempts, binds, blinds, ensnares, dulling our conscience and searing our conscience. We are called to battle. We need to be **armed, armoured and alert**. We need to recognise the call to fight and we need to understand our enemy. In Ephesians 6, we read of the full armour of God. The first part of this armour is **Truth**. We are to stand for the Truth. We are to recognise and expose error and deceit. We are not to allow any corrupt words to come out of our mouth. We need the breastplate of **Righteousness**, which is the righteousness of Christ. Our feet need to be prepared to proclaim **the Gospel**. We need **the shield of Faith**, a solid and substantial Faith, which can put out all the fiery darts of the wicked one. We are to take up **the helmet of Salvation** (Note it is not a nightcap, but a helmet). We are called to battle. The Scripture is **the Sword of the Spirit**. The Word of God is an offensive weapon. **Prayer** is also an offensive weapon. We need to pray the Psalms. We need to be alert with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints, boldly proclaiming the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Even if we are in chains. Submit to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you (James 4:7). God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7). I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (1 Philippians 4:13).

Be Prepared

God is generous. We are privileged. We need to be considerate. Satan is real. The warfare is serious. We need to be prepared. Christianity is practical.

To Destroy Evil

Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, to crush satan's head. Do not give any ground to the powers of darkness. Do not play into satan's hands. **Be armed. Be armoured. Be alert.**

To Know Him and to Make Him Known

“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height - to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” Ephesians 3:14-19

The Benediction

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” Ephesians 3:20-21

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