

On June 19, before we rushed through Philippians, I got started on the Prison Epistles with an introductory study.

The Prison Epistles are: Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians.

The first three on the list were written about the same time, with Philippians coming near the end of Paul's first imprisonment.

Ephesians has the words "To the saints who are at Ephesus" included in v. 1, but the words "at Ephesus" are in dispute among the manuscripts. Did Paul include them in the original?

- The question isn't important for doctrine
- The disputed words were known to early church fathers like Origen, Basil, and Jerome
- The speculation is that the book of Ephesians was delivered first to Ephesus but was intended to be circulated among the churches of the region (no personal greetings)
- Some think that when Paul instructed the Colossians to read the letter "from Laodicea" that he was referring to what we call Ephesians

Today I want to zero in on Ephesians and introduce it specifically.

## I. Authorship

- Paul uses his own name as author twice, 1.1, 3.1
- Critics (starting in 19<sup>th</sup> century!) attempt to suggest a disciple of Paul who used Paul's name
  - Inconsistent with early Christian practice (1<sup>st</sup> c.)
  - The themes of the book represent some of the greatest heights of Pauline thought – would a disciple be greater than the master?
  - Paul's authorship widely and indisputably accepted by early churches

## II. Destination

- The “encyclical letter” theory already mentioned, but countered by Hoehner:

“However, it seems better to accept ‘in Ephesus’ as genuine because of the wide geographical distribution of the Greek manuscripts that do include those words. Also no manuscripts of this epistle mention any other city, and none have only the word ‘in’ followed by a space to insert a city’s name. The prescript or title ‘To the Ephesians’ appears in all manuscripts of this epistle. Furthermore, all the letters Paul wrote to churches mention their destinations.”<sup>1</sup>

- However, it is likely that Paul intended the letter to be read by other churches as well, especially given the lack of personal greetings and other details
- Ephesus itself:
  - Major center in Asia Minor during 1<sup>st</sup> century
    - Noted as a center of commerce
    - Noted as the home of Artemis (Diana) worship — temple to Artemis one of the seven wonders of the ancient world
  - Paul’s visits
    - Briefly on the way back from 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey (left Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus) — Ac 18.19-22
    - Paul spent several years in Ephesus on 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey
      - Paul baptized John the Baptist’s followers (Ac 19.1-7)
      - Paul taught in the hall of Tyrannus (Ac 19.8-10)
      - Miracles performed, sorcerers converted (Ac 19.11-12, 17-20)

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<sup>1</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, “Ephesians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 613.

- Jewish exorcists famously try to invoke name of Christ and Paul (Ac 19.13-16)
- The great riot at Ephesus after the silversmith's complaints (Ac 19.23-41)
- Paul's great farewell address to the Ephesian elders (Ac 20.13-38)

### III. Place and Date

- Paul wrote as a prisoner, most likely in Rome (Ac 28.30)
- No hint of release, as mentioned in Philippians and Philemon, thus early in imprisonment (about AD 60)

"Following his release he traveled, wrote 1 Timothy and Titus, was arrested again, wrote 2 Timothy, and was martyred in Rome."<sup>2</sup>

- "Tychicus evidently delivered this epistle to the Ephesian church (Eph. 6:21-22)."<sup>3</sup>

### IV. Purpose

- Hints at purpose
  - Warning of Ac 20 about false teachers without and false brethren within
  - Revelation 2.2 shows they kept out the false teachers, but they failed to keep their "first love" fresh (Rev 2.4)
  - Paul wrote to Timothy in Ephesus about the goal of love (1 Tim 1.5)
  - Paul uses the term love (noun and verb) 19 times in Ephesians out of 107 times in all his epistles (more than 1/6<sup>th</sup>)
- The purpose, acc. to Hoehner, is to demonstrate the love of Christ in the church between both Jews and Gentiles

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<sup>2</sup> Hoehner, 614.

<sup>3</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Ephesians: Date.

- Constable notes the revelation of the church as “mystery,” previously unknown, but now made known to Jews and Greeks, thus pointing to “unity” as the major purpose.

## Outline

Everyone divides Ephesians into two major sections, and its contents are easy to outline. I offer you Wiersbe’s outline since he has such a good way of presenting it:

### I. DOCTRINE: OUR RICHES IN CHRIST—chapters 1–3

#### A. Our spiritual possessions in Christ—1:4–14

1. From the Father—1:4–6
2. From the Son—1:7–12
3. From the Spirit—1:13–14

**First Prayer**—for enlightenment—1:15–23

#### B. Our spiritual position in Christ—2:1–22

1. Raised and seated on the throne—2:1–10
2. Reconciled and set into the temple—2:11–22

**Second Prayer**—for enablement—3:1–21

(vv. 2–13 are a parenthesis)

### II. DUTY: OUR RESPONSIBILITIES IN CHRIST—chapters 4–6

#### A. Walk in unity—4:1–16

#### B. Walk in purity—4:17–5:17

1. Walk not as other Gentiles—4:17–32
2. Walk in love—5:1–6
3. Walk as children of light—5:7–14
4. Walk carefully—5:15–17

#### C. Walk in harmony—5:18–6:9

1. Husbands and wives—5:18–33
2. Parents and children—6:1–4
3. Masters and servants—6:5–9

#### D. Walk in victory—6:10–24<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Warren W Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996), 7.