

A Daily Devotional Study Guide



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The Epistle to the EPHESIANS



WEEK 1

“Faithful Saints”

Study: Ephesians 1:1-2

Reading: Acts 18:1-23

Memory: Romans 8:22

What Does the Bible Say?

As we begin to look at the letter to the Ephesians, we will take a quick look at the culture of the region the letter was sent to. The city of Ephesus contained one of the seven ancient wonders of the world, a temple to the goddess Diana. Diana was the Roman name, but she was better known by her Greek name of Artemis in early New Testament times. She was the goddess of fertility and was one of the most revered goddesses in the ancient world. The city of Ephesus in that day was a cultural center of the region and many people came from all over to worship at the temple. Worship rituals involved sexually immoral acts and sexual immorality was common place and even expected in those days.

It is important that we keep in mind as we read through the letter that it was written as just that, a letter. A letter that was written to address real people with real problems. As we read through this book we will see many of the things that the people of Ephesus struggled with are the same things that many people in our culture will struggle with today.

It seems quite interesting that Paul would begin the chapter by addressing it to the “saints.”. The word saint has the idea of being set apart for a special use. Sadly, churches like the Catholic church have somewhat corrupted the meaning of a saint. Their definition of a saint is much different than what is described in the Bible. Every



Statue of the goddess Artemis

follower of Christ is to be a saint. That does not mean that anyone of us can be perfect, but every believer should strive to be pure and set apart for the use of the master. The fact that all believers are called saints is an encouraging truth because it reveals how God views each of His children in a special way.

Not only are the believers described as saints, but they are also called “faithful follower.” Being set apart and being faithful are constant themes found throughout Scripture. They are two things that should be a continual part of the life of every believer. Many people attempt to follow Christ or become religious for a short time, but the mark of a true believer will be evidenced by faithfulness (vs 1).

In this greeting, which was similar to the greetings of many of the New Testament letters, Paul emphasized that grace and peace are found in Jesus Christ. Though it was a common greeting, it was also a meaningful greeting. The greeting also included a reference to both God and Jesus Christ. The Father and the Son, along with the Spirit that is mentioned throughout the epistle all play a vital role in the life of the New Testament believer.

How Does this Apply to Me?

Is your life set apart for God to use? Do you live differently than the world around you by following the principles outlined in the Word of God? Are you a faithful person? Is your life characterized by a continual obedience to God? Do you faithfully read your Bible on a daily basis? You live in a world that is often characterized by unfaithfulness. Couples are unfaithful to each other in marriage. Employees are unfaithful to their employers. Friends abandon each other when difficult times come. You as a Christian need to be different and your life should be characterized by faithfulness to Christ.

Suggestions for Prayer

* *Ask God to show you how you can be more faithful in your life.*

* *Praise the Lord for His faithfulness to you.*

Thought for the day

Ephesians 1

Who wrote this letter (vs 1)?

How does Paul describe Himself (vs 1)?

Why do you think Paul emphasized that he was chosen by God (vs 1)?

Why is it important to realize you have been chosen by God?

What are the Ephesian believers called (vs 1)?

How does this make you a saint as well?

Why is faithfulness such an important characteristic for a believer (vs 1)?

How is God described (vs 2)?

Why do you think grace and peace are such important themes of the New Testament?

Acts 18

Where did Paul set sail for (vs 18)? Who did he have with him?

What did Paul do while in Ephesus (vs 18)? Why?

Where did they stop (vs 19)?

What did Paul do while he was in Ephesus (v 19)? Why do you think he did this?

What did many of the Jews want Paul to do (vs 20)?

What did Paul desire to do if it was the will of God (vs 21)?

Where was Paul going (vs 22)? Why?

Who did Paul leave in Ephesus to minister to the people (see vs 18)?

“The Privileges of Adoption”

Study: Ephesians 1:3-8

Reading: Romans 8

Memory: Romans 8:22

I have a nephew and a niece that were adopted and when I have opportunity to spend time with their family, I don't treat them any differently than I treat my biological niece and nephew. Once they were adopted, they became a vital part of the family and the love that I try to show them is the same that I would show to the other children. I want them to understand that they are special to us and special to God.

Today, we are going to see how God has adopted us as His children and has given us a privileged position as His sons and daughters.

What Does the Bible Say?

Following the introduction, Paul praised God for the spiritual blessings that He had given them. It is interesting that once again he mentioned that God is the Father of Jesus Christ. It was important for Paul to help those who he was writing to, especially the Jews, to understand that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and that they received their spiritual blessings through Jesus. God doesn't just slightly bless His children, but He gives us many spiritual blessings (vs 3).

These blessings started even before the world began when God chose to love us in Christ. This is an amazing thought. He does not just say “before you were born,” but Paul related how God chose you before the world began. There is great debated in the realm of Christianity when it comes to the idea of being chosen by God. Some people take it to the extreme and say we don't need to evangelize because God has already chosen believers and they will be saved no matter what. Others try to avoid the idea that we are chosen by God because God has given us a free will. They often take up one side or the other, while Scripture presents both, that we are chosen and we have a free will to choose or reject Christ. Almost every time Scripture talks about believers being chosen, it emphasizes the fact that they are special to God and that they are chosen for something. In verse 4 Paul described how we were chosen to

be holy and pure before God. Believers have been chosen by God to be set apart for His plan and purpose, and part of that purpose is to evangelize and share the good news of Jesus with others (vs 4).

Your salvation can not be based on any good work that you do because God decided to adopt you and bring you into His family. The fact that He did this in advance (predestined us) indicates that He chose you knowing you would be a sinner and knowing all your faults and failures. Even though He knew this, it brought Him great pleasure to pick you and adopt you to be His own child (vs 5).

This was an amazing picture of the grace of God because He poured out His blessings upon you through Jesus Christ. You did nothing to earn it or deserve it, yet God chose to give it to you. Your freedom from sin was purchased with the blood of His Son. You are accepted by God through the blood of Jesus, this blood that offers you the forgiveness of sins. Paul placed an emphasis that God was like a rich father who didn't hold any love back towards His children, but in His wisdom and understanding made a way for us to become His blessed children (vs 6-8).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Do you realize how right you are because of how rich your Heavenly Father is? Paul wanted believers to know that God held nothing back when He chose to love them. He wasn't a stingy Father when it came to showing grace and love, but was an amazing Father, offering all His riches to His children and holding nothing back. This thought should cause you to rejoice and to praise Him. It should also remind you that He chose you and loved you for a purpose. He chose you to be “holy and blameless” before Him. God wants you to live differently than the world around you so you can shine as a light for Him. When you realize how much God loves you and what He did for you in the sinful state you were in, that should cause you to want to live set apart for Him.

Thought for the day

Why do you think Paul declared that God was the Father of Jesus (vs 3)?

What has God blessed us with (vs 3)?

What do you think this means?

Why do you think Paul used the term “heavenly places” (ESV - vs 3)?

What did God do before the world began (vs 4)?

Why do you think Paul emphasized this?

How has God called you to live (vs 4)?

What does it mean to be “predestined” (ESV - vs 5)?

What did God predestine for His children (vs 5)?

Why do you think Paul mentioned that this was according to God’s will (vs 5)?

What did Paul praise God for (vs 6)?

How are we blessed (vs 6)?

What do you think this means?

What do we have through the blood of Jesus (vs 7)?

Why did Paul emphasize the riches of God’s grace (vs 7)?

Why is it important to realize you need the great grace of God?

How much grace did God give you (vs 8)?

****God “lavished” His grace on you through His riches. The picture is one of an extremely wealthy man adopting a child, giving Him access to all His great riches.*

“The Great Mystery”

Study: Ephesians 1:9-14

Reading: 2 Peter 1

Memory: Romans 8:22

On occasion, I have had to have some papers notarized. A person who is a notary has an official stamp that they use to stamp a document to help businesses know that you are who you say you are. When I go to a notary, I can’t just tell them my name, but have to hand them my identification documents so they can give the form I need a stamp of approval.

Today, we are going to see that we have the seal of the Holy Spirit on our lives. Not only does He reveal to us that we are believers, but He also is a portion of our inheritance that we will fully receive after this life.

What Does the Bible Say?

The term “mystery” meant something that was hidden but had now been revealed. The will of God was veiled in the Old Testament writings. There were many predictions about Jesus Christ, but many of them were intertwined with other Scripture and predictions about the reign of the Messiah. God had purposed from the beginning of time to send forth Jesus at the exact time He needed to come to the earth to fulfill the prophecies about His first advent. Jesus made it possible for many to be united with God so one day God will be able to gather all believers to Him and dwell together for all eternity. The emphasis in these verses was that everything happened according to the plan of God (vs 9-10).

The term “in Him,” referring to Jesus, is mentioned many times in Scripture because all we have as believers is because of Christ. Here we have an inheritance because of Jesus. This goes along with the theme of adoption mentioned earlier. God chose to adopt us and not only give us special rights and privileges here on earth, but we have an eternal inheritance waiting for us. He chose to do this out of His desire to love us, even though we were sinners. Paul mentioned here once again that we were “predestined” (ESV) by God, emphasizing the glorious fact that He chose you. The hope found in Jesus Christ was first revealed to the

Jews and then was shared with the rest of the world. This was God's plan to bring great glory to Himself. The God of Israel came to earth to not only save the Israelites, but the whole world (vs 11-12).

Once again in verse 13, we see the phrase "in Him" used a few times. It emphasized the fact that salvation is not of our own power. When they heard the good news about Jesus they believed what they had heard. Once they believed, they were sealed with the Holy Spirit that had been promised by Jesus. For a document to become official, it had to have a seal from the authority who was issuing the document. Each leader had a special and unique seal so people would know the document was authentic. The Holy Spirit was God's seal so that those who believed would know that salvation was authentic. Not only did he make it authentic, but he is also given to us as a guarantee, a type of down payment. We have the Holy Spirit to help guide and lead us and He is a small portion of what we will have for all eternity. All the praise for this belongs to God and not to men because it is all part of His great plan (vs 13-14).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Do you realize that God chose you before the foundation of the world? This is not to be a source of pride, but one of great humility because it emphasizes the fact that He chose you when you could do nothing of value to earn His favor. He has given you great riches here on earth through the Holy Spirit on this earth and has promised you a future home with Him. God chose to do all of this for you and simply wants you to choose to follow Him and His ways. Take time to ponder how much God has done for you even though you didn't deserve any of it. Choose to show that same love and care to others around you today!

Suggestions for Prayer

* *Thank God for choosing to make you His child.*

* *Praise the Lord for His amazing grace towards you.*

Thought for the day

What did God make known to us (vs 9)?

Why was this described as a "mystery" (vs 9)?

Why does Paul emphasize many times that this was part of God's will (vs 9)?

How did Christ help fulfill God's purpose (vs 9)?

What do you think the phrase "fullness of time" means (vs 10 - ESV)?

How is God going to unite all things to Him (vs 10)?

How does this give you great hope?

Why do you think Paul uses the phrase "In Him" many times (vs 11)?

What do you have because of Christ (vs 11)?

What does it mean to be "predestined" (vs 11-ESV)?

How does God work all things (vs 11)?

How should this be a great comfort and help to you?

Who were the first ones to believe in Jesus (vs 12)?

How did this bring great glory to God?

What brief process of salvation is described in verse 13?

What does it mean that you are sealed with the Holy Spirit (vs 13)?

How is the Holy Spirit a down payment (vs 14)?

How should this cause great praise to God (vs 14)?

Describe some of the riches you have in Christ.

“A Greater Understanding”

Study: Ephesians 1:15-17

Reading: Philippians 3:7-16, Colossians 1:9-14

Memory: Romans 8:22

I have learned many things about boats over the years. I remember a specific lesson I learned after I accidentally hooked the battery cables to the wrong terminals. After I did this, the boat would not start. I checked all the fuses I could see and still couldn't get it working. I pulled out the manual and checked over the schematic trying to trace the problem. Though I learned a lot along the way, I still couldn't get it to start. Finally, after some internet research I found that there was a special fuse near the starter that was keeping the boat from starting. Once I replaced that, it worked without a problem. I have found that the more I understand how something works, the easier it becomes to fix problems.

Today, we are going to see that Paul desired that the Ephesians understand more about how salvation works, the more they understood God, the stronger their faith would become.

What Does the Bible Say?

In verse 15 Paul related to the Ephesians how he had heard of their faith in God and love for all the saints. These are two of the greatest things Christian believers can display. Hebrews 11:16 says, “without faith it is impossible to please Him” and John 13:35 states, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” Paul was grateful to hear that the church was doing well, but he does not stop there. They were doing great spiritually and He wanted them to continue on in what they had been doing. Instead of choosing to stop praying for them because they were doing well, he wanted to pray for them even more. Paul declared that he didn't stop praying for the Ephesians. This did not mean that he prayed for them 24 hours a day, but they were on his mind on a regular basis (vs 15-16).

Paul prayed for them, but not for their physical needs. There is nothing wrong with praying for the physical needs of people, but sometimes it is easy to stop there or only pray for people when they are going through physical trials. Physical healing is important and good, but

Paul knew that physical healing was not nearly as important as spiritual healing and growth.

It is interesting to note that Paul began His prayer by once again mentioning both God and Jesus. He did this a few times already in the letter stating that God was the Father and Jesus was the Son. He called God the “Father of glory” indicating that God had all the power and strength needed for the believers, but he also referenced Jesus to help the believers understand that it was Jesus who gave them access to God. Most societies believe in some type of supernatural being. The Romans worshiped many different gods. If you would have taken a stroll down the main streets of Ephesus in those days you would have passed many different statues of various gods along with temples dedicated to those gods. This is not to mention the main goddess Diana (Artemis). The God Paul was mentioning was not just another god, but the God of glory, the God of all things who gave His Son to be the sacrifice for the sins of all men.

Paul began His prayer by praying that the believers would have the “Spirit of wisdom.” The ESV chose to capitalize “spirit” assuming it to be a reference to the Holy Spirit. The NLT simply says “spiritual wisdom.” Paul wanted the believers to be wise in spiritual matters. He wanted them to understand more about God and the great plan that God had through Jesus Christ. He knew that this was the core of Christian faith. Paul had believed in God ever since he was a child, but the day he met Jesus everything changed. He knew that the source of a successful Christian life would not be based on keeping certain rules, but would be an outflow of the knowledge and understanding of the love of God (v 17).

How Does this Apply to Me?

If Paul was writing about your faith and love could he say the same about you that he did the Ephesians? Faith and love should set you apart from the world and display to others that you are a child of God. It is important that you grow in those two areas because those things will be the foundation of your faith. Notice that Jesus didn't say that people will know you are a Christian by the way you follow the rules and Paul didn't pray that believers would be good rule followers. The emphasis was on acting in love out of a heart that knew God and understood God's great plan of salvation.

What “reason” do you think Paul was referring to (vs 15)?

What two characteristics of the believers had Paul heard of (vs 15)?

- 1.
- 2.

Take a moment to describe how these two things are prevalent in your life.

Why do you think Paul mentioned loving the saints instead of loving all men or loving unbelievers (vs 15)?

What did Paul not stop doing (vs 16)?

What example did Paul set by praying for the Ephesians (vs 16)?

Why do you think Paul mentioned God and Jesus Christ together (vs 17)?

Why do you think he called God, the “God of glory” (vs 17-ESV)?

What do you think it means to have the “Spirit of Wisdom” (vs 17-ESV)?

What did Paul want the Holy Spirit to help reveal (vs 17)?

Why do you think Paul emphasized the importance of knowing God (vs 17)?

Philippians 3:7-10

What did Paul say really didn’t matter (vs 7)? (read the previous verses)

What did Paul say was one of the most important things in life (vs 8)?

What was Paul willing to suffer (vs 8)?

What did Paul discover in Christ (vs 9)?

What did Paul seek to know (vs 10)?

“Rich in Power”

Study: Ephesians 1:18-23

Reading: Isaiah 40:12-27, Acts 2:25-36

Memory: Romans 8:22

One trick I used to like to play on my sisters while they were driving down the road was to put the car in neutral. All I would have to do was to knock the gear shifter that was between the seats up one notch so the transmission would be in neutral. I would get a good laugh when I saw the puzzled look on their faces, until they realized what I had done. A car that is in neutral has a lot of power. When the gas pedal is pressed the RPM’s will go up and the engine will rev. There is plenty of power, but until you put the engine in drive, you are not making use of the power that is in that engine.

Our Christian life can be compared to a car in neutral. We have all of God’s power available to us, but until we decide to put it into use, it doesn’t do us any good.

What Does the Bible Say?

In verse 18 Paul continued his prayer that we started looking at yesterday. He prays that we would understand what we truly have in Christ. The word “hope” doesn’t mean that we hope something will happen but are not really sure if it will. It is something we have because of the salvation that God promises. Hope is a sure thing. Paul wanted the believers to be open to the hope they had in Christ and to know what great riches we have in our calling (our salvation). We have a glorious inheritance waiting for us in heaven and also receive great benefits of our position as God’s children here on this earth.

The description of the power of God places a strong emphasis on His incredible power. Paul emphasized the great power of God by adding that His power was “immeasurable” (ESV). The end of the verse also emphasized the “great might” (ESV) of God. This power was on full display through the resurrection of Jesus. He conquered death and is now seated at the right hand of God. Throughout Scripture, the right hand is a reference to power and position. The second most powerful man in a

nation would often sit at the right hand of the king. Many times he would have the same power as the king himself. This position was far greater and stronger than any earthly power. The name of Jesus was greater than any name that had or would ever come. Often names were associated with power. For instance, when someone was titled “ambassador,” “commander,” or even “caesar,” that title came with great power. No earthly power, whether physical or spiritual, was stronger or greater than Jesus (vs 19-21).

God chose to give this authority to Jesus, putting “all things under His feet.” This is actually a quote from Psalms 8:6 indicating that Jesus was greater than all things in the universe. God also called Jesus to be the leader of all things and the leader of the church. Jesus is pictured as being the head and the church is the body. It is the head that makes all the decisions and the body that follows. When that happens, the church experiences the great fullness that God has planned for it. The emphasis is placed on the fact that you can have fullness in this life because of Christ (vs 22-23).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Are you using the power that you have access to through Christ? You can conquer any sin that comes into your life through the immeasurable power of Christ. Paul’s prayer was that the believers know and understand this great power more and more. He didn’t want them to trust in their own power, but to look to the source of true power. The end result would be a fullness in this life and a great hope in the life to come. This is still God’s desire for you today. He wants you to have a full life and knows that it will only come as you submit to Jesus as your head. When you choose to listen to Him and use His power in your daily life, He will reward you with great fullness. What you have in Christ and because of Christ is far more than anything this world could ever offer.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * *Ask God to show you how you can use the power He has given you in a way that will most honor Him.*
- * *Praise God for all of His wonderful power.*
- * *Thank God for the power He has made available to you in your life.*

What do you think Paul meant by “eyes of your heart” (vs 18 - ESV)?

What does it mean to be “enlightened” (vs 18 - ESV)?

What did Paul pray that believers would know (v 19)?

Why is biblical hope so important (vs 18)?

How is the inheritance of the saints described (vs 18)?

How did Paul describe the power of God (vs 19)?

Who is God’s power directed towards (vs 19)?

How was this power displayed on the earth (vs 19)?

Where is Jesus now (vs 20)? What does this mean for believers?

What does Jesus have power over (vs 21)?

Why is this so significant?

Why do you think that Paul described how the name of Jesus is greater than any name that has ever been or ever will be (vs 21)?

What does it mean that Jesus put all things under His feet (vs 22)?

What is Christ the head over (vs 22)?

Why do you think that Paul used the illustration of the head and the body (vs 22-23)?

What do you think this should mean to you in your daily life?

What do you think the fullness of Christ is (vs 23)?

What does Christ want to do for you (vs 23)?

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. 10 But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you. 12 So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, In 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. 18 Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.