

H O U S E o f W I S D O M

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Ephesians - Part 1

City of Ephesus: On his third missionary journey, Paul spent three years in Ephesus, capital of the chief province of Asia. The temple of Diana (Artemis, originally built by Greeks) was important to the commerce of the city. Much of the Mediterranean world considered it to be such a sacred and impeccable institution, that the city became the chief banking establishment in all of Asia Minor. Idol worship was prevalent in all the east, and often addressed by Paul. He had so much influence on the people in Ephesus that the craftsman who manufactured silver shrines for Diana incited a riot against him, concerned that his trade would become obsolete (Act 19:24-29). The major theme of this letter is that the church is the body of Christ. He spoke metaphorically of it as a building of which Christ is the chief cornerstone (Eph 2:20-22). Of the seven churches mentioned in the book of Revelation, estimated to have been written about 20-25 years later, Ephesus is the first. The only rebuke mentioned was that they had left their first love (Rv 2:4).

Salutation: Ephesians 1:1-2: 1. *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus*: 2. *Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and (from) the Lord Jesus Christ*. In the beginning of Paul's epistles he always mentions the Father and Son as being separate individuals (cf Rom 1:7; 1Cor 1:3; 2Cor 1:3, Gal 1:1, 3; Phl 1:2; Col 1:2-3; 1Th 1:1; 2Th 1:1-2; 1Tim 1:1-2; 2Tim 1:2; Tit 1:1, 4; Phm 1:3; Jude 1:1; Rv 1:1-2). This distinction of the Father and Son is clear in the letter to the Ephesians, as in other places: *For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father (Jn 17:3), of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. How be it there is not in every man that knowledge...* (1Cor 8:5-7).

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Verses 3-4: 3. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly (places) in Christ*: 4. *According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we (should) be holy and without blame* ^(g²⁹⁹) *before him in love*: The phrase *in heavenly (places)* should be translated *in the heavenly (things)* as it is in **John 3:12**: *If I have told you the earthly (things), and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I might tell you of the heavenly (things)?* Nicodemus, a teacher of the Jews, did not understand the concept of being born from above (modern expression - born again, verses 5-9). Earthly things are those that come from man's understanding, while heavenly things are those that come from God's understanding (cp Isa 55:7-9). Paul considered the Ephesus church, at the time of his writing, to be blessed with spiritual understanding which comes only from the Father through the Son. Another way to say it, is that they were dwelling in the heavens mentally. To be in the heavens is to be an overcomer sitting with Christ in His throne (Rv 3:21), which is a figure of sitting at the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:33). Think about how awesome are these spiritual blessings, the same as we can have today! God's plan was for all humanity *before the foundation of the world*, i.e. before anything was created.

The phrase *without blame* ^(g²⁹⁹) would be better rendered as without blemish. **Ephesians 5:27**: *That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy*

and without blemish ^(g299). A sacrifice was only offered for sins committed in ignorance (Lv 4:27-28), and all animal sacrifices were to be without blemish. In the tabernacle service, animals are a figure of the thoughts mankind has (Ps 73:22; Ec 3:18) about God. It is by a correct understanding of the sacrifice of Christ and in the study of the cross that the cause of our sin is revealed. The sacrifice of an animal is a type for letting go of a thought of the heart that is creating the problem. There was no sacrifice for intentional sin. The only remedy was a broken and contrite heart (Ps 51:17).

Leprosy is also a symbol for sinful thoughts. It literally begins with a spot in the flesh (Lv 13:1-4); or it could be in the warp or woof of the clothing (Lv 13:51-52), a type for character based on thoughts manifested by actions; or it may be in the stones of your house (Lv 14:33-34), a type of the mind, the stones of which are spiritual concepts. A person contacting leprosy was inspected by a priest, declared unclean and had to dwell outside the camp.

Verse 5: *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will...* *Predestinated* is from the Greek word *proorizo* ^(G4309) which means *to determine before*. Some will quote this and other scriptures (Rom 8:29-30) to prove that God has predetermined who will be saved and who will be lost. This idea is an error which takes away a person's free choice. What is meant by *proorizo* is explained in the same chapter: **Verse 11**: *In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will*: It is the purpose or plan that predestinates ALL mankind to be saved, 1Tim 2:3-4. The choice, however, is left to each individual.

Verses 6-7: *6. To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. 7. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace*; Note the underlined pronouns in verses 5-7. Throughout the book of Ephesians, as well as others, there is a clear distinction made between the Father and Son. The plan predestinated by the Father was implemented through His only Son. The Son is not the Father, as taught by many. He is referred to as a father (Isa 9:6), and he is a father in the sense that he created mankind. Redemption, which infers captivity and bondage, comes via the Son having given his life, when we accept the sacrifice and understand it so that we are delivered from our sins. The underlying Greek rendered *redemption*, carries the idea of being loosed from something. If the Father is not keeping a record of our sins (2Cor 5:19), then He did not send the Son so that we could be forgiven, but so that we could be delivered from the bondage to sin, part of which is a result of man's understanding of the law.

The riches, mentioned in verse 7, are a figure of knowledge. Riches are represented by a crown, and a crown is a figure of knowledge (Pr 14:24, 18). Unsanctified riches (Mt 13:22) are deceitful and choke out the word of truth, whereas sanctified riches come only from God through Jesus Christ. The riches of God's grace is the abundant knowledge and influence of His love as revealed by the cross of His Son.

Colossians 2:1-3: *1. For I wish you to know how great a conflict (anxiety) I have for you and those in Laodicea, and as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, 2. that their hearts may be comforted, being united in love, and to all riches of the full assurance of the understanding, to the full knowledge of the secret (hidden things) of the God and Father, and of the Christ, 3. in whom are all the treasures of the wisdom and the knowledge hid...* (YLT)

When our hearts are knit together in love, we will no longer condemn others, as we will understand that they are just like us, knowing not what they do. Do not let anyone *beguile you with enticing words* (verse 4) of false teachings about the Father and Son. Teachers of error destroy the concept of the Father's love as revealed through His only begotten Son, in whom are hid all spiritual riches. Let your hearts be filled with true love.

Amen.

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