

# Studies on Ephesians

## Study 1: Ephesians 1:1-10

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### Background

This series of studies focuses on the letter of Ephesians. The earliest manuscripts do not include the words 'in Ephesus', although the majority of texts agree that this letter began as a circular letter written to a group of churches in what is now western Turkey - of which Ephesus itself was the most important.

There is some debate over the authorship of Ephesians:

- There are convincing arguments in support of 'Pauline' authorship, citing tradition and autobiographical information
- Detractors cite the inconsistent language and style and divergences in theology and similarities with Colossians.

If Paul was the author, he may have written from prison (probably in Rome in the early 60s) linking this letter with Philippians, Colossians and Philemon - the other 'letters from prison'. The apostle Paul sets us an incredible example of how to rejoice through trials and tribulation; 'faith in action'.

### The Message

#### Verse 1

Paul was "*an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God*". Paul's statement expresses great wisdom and humility. We may all reflect on it as an honour that we are what we are by the will of God. If we try to live life in our own strength we shall fail. We need to spend time with the Lord asking what His will is for our lives, and what He wants us to do. We should not be driven by selfish desires.

- How can we know what God's will is in our lives, and what He wants us to do?
- How might we describe ourselves if we were writing such a letter?
- What do you think it means to be "*in Christ*"?

**Table 1: Being 'in Christ'<sup>1</sup>**

Aspect	Verses
God's purpose and election take place 'in Christ'	1:4, 9, 11
God's grace and redemption are found 'in Christ'	1:6-7
All things in heaven and earth are summed up 'in Christ'	1:10

<sup>1</sup> Snodgrass, K. (1996), p.47

Aspect	Verses
People hope 'in Christ', hear the word 'in Christ', and by faith are sealed 'in Christ'	1:12-13

## Verse 2

This verse begins with the apostolic benediction “*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*”. There is a definite link between grace and peace which as Christians is something we all need to discover. It is only through grace that we can understand the free and undeserved love and favour of God. Peace stems from a realization of this profound love and acceptance. Too many Christians are living in condemnation, but we must remember John’s words in John 8:34-36.

- Why do you think it was so important to God to prompt Paul to begin the letter with this greeting?
- How could we use this in our prayer life, and in our fellowship with one another?

## Verse 3

God has blessed us “*with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly regions with Christ*”. This is a wonderful verse to meditate upon - an incredible truth to get hold of. God does not want us to have second best or a part share. He wants us to walk with Him so that we are able to receive all of these spiritual blessings.

- What does every spiritual blessing mean?
- What spiritual blessings do we already see as a consequence of being saved by God?

## Verses 4 - 6

God “*chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, for us to be holy and without blemish before Him in love*”. Like verse 3, verse 4 is another wonderful verse to meditate upon, and is reminiscent of Psalm 139:13-16 in part. It is interesting how this verse 4 ends “*in love*”.

Divine election is a constant theme in Paul’s letters. We are called to be a Holy Nation; “*You shall become a kingdom of priests for Me, a holy nation*” (Exodus 19:6). We need to constantly remind ourselves of these truths when we feel insecure, worthless and failures. God “*knows the plans He has for us*” (Jeremiah 29:11-14).

- What does it mean to be ‘*chosen in Christ*’?
- What does it mean ‘*for us to be holy and without blemish before Him in love*’?
- What does it mean to be ‘*adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ*’? (Romans 8:15-23).
- What does adoption reveal about God’s love for us, and how can we respond to Him?

## Verses 7 - 8

Redemption is “*the deliverance effected through the death of Christ from the retributive wrath of a holy God and the merited penalty of sin*”. The Ephesians were familiar with the Graeco-Roman practice of redemption; slaves were freed by the payment of a ransom. Similarly the ransom necessary to free the sinners from the bondage of sin and the resulting curse imposed by the law (Galatians 3:13) was the death of Christ. Only the blood of Jesus can take away the guilt and the stain of sin, allowing us to experience true forgiveness. God did not have to redeem us, but He chose to, paying an incredible price.

- What sacrifices are we prepared to make for God?
- Why did God redeem us from the slavery of sin through His blood, and what are the results of this?
- How could we use the wisdom and understanding that God gives us more effectively?

### Verse 9 - 10

God decided to make “*known to us the mystery of His will*”.

- What does this mean?
- Why did God do this?
- When will we finally know all the mysteries of His will?