

Ephesians

Unity and Love through Grace

Author: The Apostle Paul

- Relatively uncontested until the past 200 years.
- Other options are predominantly pseudonymous authors pretending to be Paul.
- Other arguments against Pauline authorship include style, vocabulary, and theological content.

Date: AD 62, During Paul's Roman imprisonment.

Audience: The Ephesian Church (and surrounding churches)

- Very large and important port city in Asia
- Home to many beliefs and religions, most importantly worship at the Temple of Artemis.
- Became a hub for a number of smaller cities surrounding it (hence the cyclical letter).
- Paul in Ephesus
 - Paul visited Ephesus during his Second Missionary Journey (AD 52). He spent much of his time in Corinth, but traveled to Ephesus for a short time.
 - Paul visited during his Third Missionary Journey and stayed 2.5-3 years (AD 53-56)
 - Paul met with the Ephesian Elders at Miletus (AD 57)

Purpose: There is no stated purpose or reason for Paul's letter to Ephesus. We can only speculate at the reason Paul wrote the letter. Since so many have done so with different results, it is probably best not to try to narrow down a specific purpose, but rather focus on its themes.

Themes:

- *Unity* – The unity of the church
 - Words for unity used only here, “one” used 14 times, “In Christ”, “in whom”, “in the Lord”, “together with”
 - Metaphors for the church: the body of Christ, the holy temple, the bride
 - The “body” metaphor is expanded to show Christ at its head.
 - Ephesians 4:1-6 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit- just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call- 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

“Unity, then, is a very prominent theme in Ephesians...but how is this unity to be achieved? Forced unity is unacceptable because it is not genuine; thus unity must originate from within. True unity is accomplished when people love one another.” (Harold W. Hoehner)

- *Love* – love of God for us, our love for others, our love for Christ

- “Unity without love is possible, but love without unity is not. Love is the central ingredient for true unity, laying the foundation for internal and external unity.”
 - Ephesians 3:17-19 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith- that you, being rooted and grounded in **love**, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the **love** of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.
- Follow up on Ephesus:
 - Revelation 2:1-5 Revelation 2:1 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: 'The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. 2 "'I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. 3 I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. 4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.
 - They remembered to be separated from false teaching
 - But they forgot the key element of their love for Jesus Christ
- *Grace* – God’s outpouring of unmerited favor
 - All of the work that God has accomplished in reconciling us to himself was done as an outpouring of his love and favor for us.
 - Ephesians 2:5-9 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ- by **grace** you have been saved- 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his **grace** in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by **grace** you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Structure:

- Ephesians divides up into two parts (1-3 and 4-6)
 - What God has done: United us in Grace (ch. 1-3)
 - What we must do: Live out our Unity (ch. 4-6)

What God has done: United us in Grace

- Not a single command
- The entire section is detailing the work that God has done on our behalf:
 - God Elects
 - Ephesians 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

- God Unites
 - God draws Gentiles and Jews together in one new body, removing the division, fulfilling the law, breaking down the barrier. One body.
 - Ephesians 2:19-22 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.
- God is Gracious
 - Ephesians 2:1-5 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience- 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ- by grace you have been saved-
 - He did not do this because we were ethnically Jewish, or because we were in some way superior to others. He did it because it was his gracious choice to do it.
- God gives us faith
 - Paul uses the word “mystery” seven times in this book to refer to something that wasn’t clear before, but that God was making clear now.
 - God must reveal “the mystery of the gospel” (6:19) to us.

Paul presents unity in these first 3 chapters as an established fact. God has done _____ so we are united. God has made all of us one in Him. In these last chapters unity is presented as a daily goal. Not a contradiction, but understanding what God has done (1-3) and now what we must do (4-6). Here is where we get the commands.

What we must do: Live out our Unity (ch. 4-6)

- Live a life that is worthy of our calling in Jesus
 - What is the calling? To display through love and light the unity God has given us.
 - Paul characterizes this life as humble, gently, patient, forbearing in love, eager to keep unity.
- Build others up
 - Instead of anger...encourage.
 - Instead of stealing...be generous with what you have.
 - Instead of speaking your mind...build up with your words.
- Make the most of every opportunity that you have.
 - Ephesians 5:15-16 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.
- Stand to the End

- Ephesians 6:13-14 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. 14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,
- Standing firm to the end is something that we take for granted in the lives of other believers. As someone who has known professing believers for some time now, we shouldn't do that.

What we must not do: Partner with Darkness

Ephesians 5:3-14 But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. 4 Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. 5 For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not associate (partner) with them; 8 for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), 10 and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. 13 But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, 14 for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

Why Has God Done This?

Ephesians 1:3-14 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. 11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.