

Through the Bible Book by Book

New Testament

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EPHESIANS

Theme: For depth and sublimity of teachings, Ephesians stands supreme among all of Paul's Epistles.

It has been "*Paul's third heaven Epistle*," "for he soars from the depths of ruin to the heights of redemption" - and "*the Alps of the New Testament*," for "here we are bidden by God to mount step by step, until we reach the highest possible point where man can stand, even in the presence of God Himself."

The Epistle to the Ephesians is a great exposition of a fundamental doctrine of Paul's preaching, namely, the unity of all the universe in Christ, the unity of Jew and Gentile in His body, the church, and God's purpose in that body for time and eternity. The Epistle is divided into two sections: doctrinal (Ch. 1-3) and practical (Chs. 4-6).

- In the first section Paul sets forth the grandeur and glory of the Christian's calling;
- In the second he shows what should be the conduct of the Christian in view of this calling.

In brief he teaches that a holy calling demands a holy walk. "He calls upon his readers to rise to the highest dignity of their calling, and as he does so, there emerges a picture of the church as a body predestined before the ages, to unite Jew and Gentile together, which, through the ages to come has to exhibit before the universe the fullness of the Divine life, living the life of God, imitating God's character, wearing God's armor, fighting God's battles, forgiving as God forgives, educating as God educates, and all this that it may fulfill the wider work whereby Christ is to be center of the universe."

We shall sum up the theme as follows: the Church is chosen, redeemed, and united in Christ; therefore the Church should walk in unity and in newness of life, in the strength of the Lord and by the armor of God.

Why Written: There were two dangers that threatened the church at Ephesus:

- A temptation to sink to heathen standards; and
- A lack of unity between Jew and Gentile.

To offset the first danger, Paul sets forth the holiness of the Christian's calling in contrast with their former sinful condition as heathen.

To guard against the second, he presents the Lord Jesus as making peace between Jew and Gentile by the blood of His cross, and making of the twain a new body.

When Written: During Paul's first imprisonment at Rome. It was sent by Tychicus who also bore letters to the Colossians and to Philemon.

Contents: The student will notice as he studies the outline with its main divisions and subheads, that the Epistle yields itself to an arrangement in triplets, as suggested by Dr. Riley in his book "*Ephesians the Threefold Epistle*."

Doctrinal Section: The Church's Calling. Chs. 1-3.

I. The threefold source of our salvation. 1:1-18.

II. The threefold manifestation of God's power. 1:19 to 2:22.

III. A threefold statement concerning Paul. Ch.3.

Practical Section: The Church's Walk Chs. 4-6.

I. A threefold exhortation to the whole church. 4:1 to 5:21.

II. A threefold exhortation to the family. 5:22 to 6:9.

III. A threefold expression of spiritual life. 6:10-24.

DOCTRINAL SECTION: THE CHURCH'S CALLING. CHS. 1-3.

I. The threefold source of our salvation. 1:1-18.

Our salvation, which is the sum of all blessings, finds its source in:

1. *Predestination* - by the Father, who chose us before the foundation of the world to be His children and to be without spot or blemish. 1:4-6.
2. *Redemption* - by the Son, through whom is given unto us a knowledge of God's eternal plan for the universe, and an eternal inheritance. 1:7-12.
3. *Sealing* - by the Spirit, which is an earnest - a first payment - of the complete redemption which will be ours in the future. 1:13-14.

Paul utters a prayer that the Ephesians may have a still fuller and deeper knowledge of the privilege and power of their salvation 1:15-18.

II. The threefold manifestation of God's power. Chs. 1:19 to 2:22.

1. God's power was manifested in relation to Christ (1:19-23) in three ways:

- (a) Resurrection.
- (b) Ascension.
- (c) Exaltation.

2. His power was manifested in relation to the individual in the following three ways:

- (a) Spiritual resurrection. 2:1-5.
- (b) Spiritual ascension. v. 6.
- (c) Power to do good works and show forth God's grace throughout eternity. vv. 7-10.

3. His power was manifested in relation to the whole of humanity (2:11-22).

It involved three classes:

(a) The Gentiles (vv. 11-13).

- In relation to Israel, they were foreigners;
- In relation to the covenants, they were strangers, for all the covenants were made with Israel;
- In relation to God they were condemned. But now they are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

(b) The Jews (vv. 14-17). Between Jew and Gentile there existed a rigid line of demarcation in regard to religion. In the temple at Jerusalem, there was a special court for the Gentiles, separated from the "court of Israel" by a wall (**the middle wall of partition**, verse 14), this wall bearing notices to the effect that Gentiles were forbidden to proceed farther under penalty of death. But in the spiritual temple of God there is no longer a dividing line; Jew and Gentile have "**access by one Spirit unto the Father.**"

(c) The Church of God (vv. 19-22). The Gentile worshipped in his idol temple, the Jew in the great sanctuary at Jerusalem. Now, both have left these buildings made with hands, to form one great spiritual temple, whose chief cornerstone is Christ, whose foundation, the apostles and New Testament prophets, and whose stones are individual Christians - the whole forming a great temple inhabited by God through the Spirit.

III. A threefold statement concerning Paul. Ch. 3.

1. Paul's ministry - to preach the mystery of the Gospel.

The mystery was the great truth that Jew and Gentile should be fellow-heirs and members of the same body (v. 6). It was hid in God from the foundation of the world, and not revealed under the Old Testament dispensation (vv. 5, 9). The Old Testament Scriptures taught the salvation of the Gentiles, but not their forming one body with the Jews.

2. Paul's prayer. vv. 13-19.

3. Paul's praise. vv. 20,21.

PRACTICAL SECTION: THE CHURCH'S WALK. CHS. 4-6.

I. A threefold exhortation to the whole church. Chs. 4:1 to 5:21.

1. An exhortation to unity (4:1-16).

Notice three facts concerning unity:

(a) Qualities essential to unity;

- Lowliness and meekness,
- Long-suffering,
- Forbearance. vv. 1-3.

(b) A description of the unity. vv. 4-6.

(c) The method of producing unity: by the use of the gifts, and by the ministry, whose office is to bring the body into spiritual perfection and oneness with Christ. vv. 7-16.

2. An exhortation to live a new life - to put off the old man and not live like other Gentiles; to put on the new man and live in conformity to God's plan. 4:17-32.

3. An exhortation to a new walk (5:1-20).

Dr. Riley suggests three features of the believer's walk as suggested by the threefold mention of the word "**walk**."

(a) Walk in love. vv. 1-7.

(b) Walk in the light. vv. 8-14.

(c) Walk circumspectly. vv. 15-20.

II. A threefold exhortation to the family. Chs. 5:21 to 6:9.

1. Wives and husbands. 5:21-33.

2. Children and parents. 6:1-4.

3. Slaves and masters. 6:5-9.

III. A threefold expression of spiritual life. Ch. 6:10-24.

1. Power (6:10-17). An exhortation to put on the whole armor of God (this figure was probably suggested by the armor of the Roman soldiers who were guarding Paul) that the Christian may realize His strength and fight His battles.

2. Prayer (6:18-19). The "when," "how," and "for whom" of prayer.

3. Peace (6:20-24). After a personal reference to Tychicus the apostle closes with a benediction.

~ end of Ephesians ~

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