

WHO AM I?

Ephesians



BLESSED TO BLESS

INTRODUCTION TO EPHESIANS

Ephesians 1:1-6

Author

Pauline authorship of Ephesians was universally accepted until modern times. Today a number of scholars claim that it was written in Paul's name by an unknown follower or imitator of Paul, and they give two main reasons: (1) the letter's style and thought does not strike everyone as characteristically Pauline; and (2) the author of Ephesians does not seem to be familiar with the letter's recipients (see Eph. 1:15; 3:2; 4:21), which seems odd given Paul's extended stay at Ephesus (Acts 19:10).

However, there are sound reasons to affirm that Paul wrote Ephesians. First, the letter explicitly claims to be Paul's (Eph. 1:1; 3:1), which should weigh heavily in the debate unless there is overwhelming evidence to the contrary. The early church—which rejected other spurious letters—unanimously accepted this letter to Ephesus as being written by Paul, and this was a city with a reputation for discernment regarding false apostolic claims (Rev. 2:2). Furthermore, letters in antiquity were usually transmitted through a person known by both author and recipient(s) who would have guaranteed the original copy's genuineness and elaborated on its details—see note on Ephesians 6:21–22 regarding Tychicus.

Second, analyses of an author's style are often subjectively based on incomplete evidence. With the aid of more sophisticated computer analysis, further careful study has shown that Ephesians has more similarities to Paul's accepted style than was earlier recognized. In addition, recent research suggests that the role of secretaries in the composition of ancient letters should be given greater consideration than it has been given in the past. Ephesians does indeed demonstrate close similarity with Paul's forms of expression and thought. Critics have used this evidence to ascribe authorship to someone Paul had influenced, but it is more likely that these marks of Pauline thought and writing style confirm that he himself wrote the book.

The question of Paul's apparent unfamiliarity with his readers can easily be explained. Ancient archaeological evidence has shown that Ephesus controlled a large network of outlying villages and rural areas up to 30 miles (48 km) from the city. Also, Acts 19:10 reveals that reports of Paul's preaching during his stay at Ephesus had radiated out to "all the residents of Asia." Hence, Paul would not have been personally acquainted with newer pockets of believers in the Ephesian villages and rural farms that had sprung up since his stay in the city a few years before the writing of this letter.

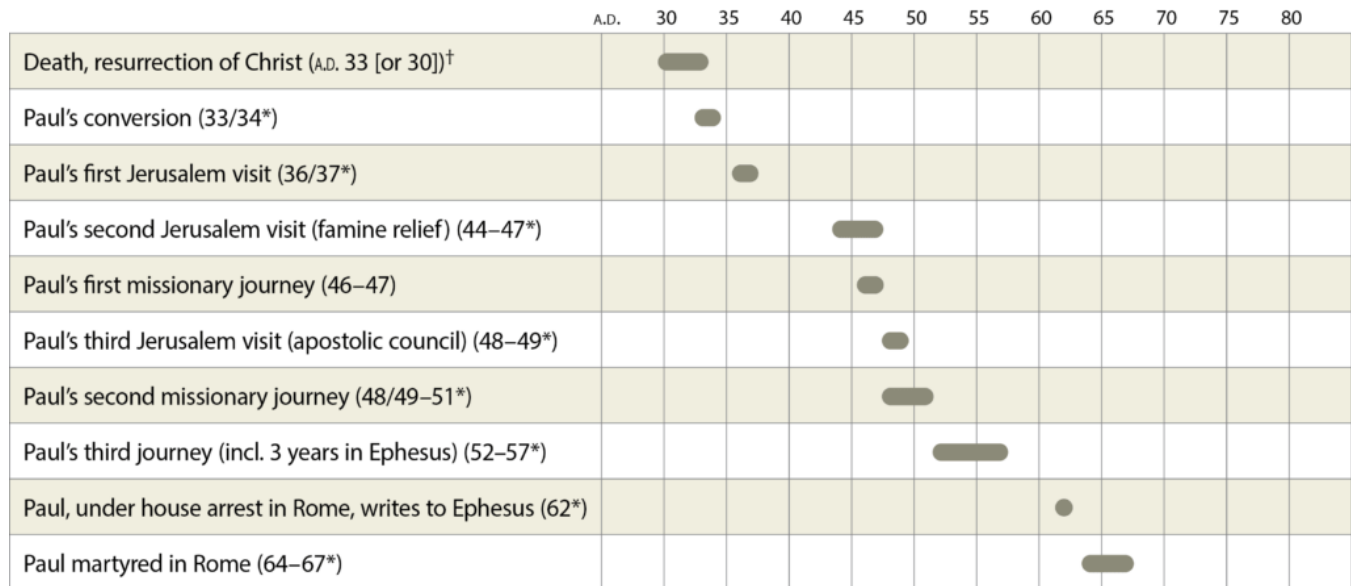
Moreover, many have suggested that Ephesians in its present form stems from the Ephesus copy of a circular letter to several Asian churches that Tychicus was delivering in the course of his journey to Colossae, along with the letter to the Colossians (Col. 4:7–9). Therefore, the absence of personal greetings is no cause for surprise.

Finally, it would be extraordinarily odd for someone to write so forcefully that his readers should "speak the truth" and "put away falsehood" (Eph. 4:15, 25) in a letter he was deceptively forging! Consequently, it can be affirmed with good confidence that Paul wrote Ephesians.

The title "to the Ephesians" is found in many early manuscripts (see note on Eph. 1:1). It indicates that the letter was written to the churches in Ephesus and the surrounding dependent region.

Date of Writing

Because Paul mentions his imprisonment (Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20), this letter should be dated to c. A.D. 62 when Paul was held in Rome (Acts 28). Critics who date Ephesians later in the first century do so from doubts about Paul's authorship rather than from strong evidence against the earlier date.



* denotes approximate date; / signifies either/or; † see *The Date of Jesus' Crucifixion*, pp. 1809–1810

Genre

Ephesians exemplifies the genre of the NT epistle, with its salutation (including sender, recipients, and greeting), thanksgiving, exposition, exhortation, and closing (including final greetings and benediction). The main argument of the letter is punctuated by several prayers and an interior benediction (Eph. 3:20–21) that marks the transition from doctrinal affirmations to practical exhortations. Chapter 2 takes the form of a spiritual biography, in which Paul recounts the saving work of Christ in the life of every Christian, and especially in the lives of Gentiles who are now included in the one new people of God. In chapter 3 the apostle takes an autobiographical turn as he testifies about his calling to the Gentiles and his prayers for the Ephesian church. The paraenesis (series of moral exhortations) consists mainly of instructions for household conduct, both for the church as the household of faith and for individual believers in their domestic relationships. The famous description of the complete armor in the last chapter is an extended metaphor. Paul also catalogs the blessings of salvation in a lofty and exhilarating lyrical style.

Ephesians finds its central unity in the work of Jesus Christ and in the community of people (both Jews and Gentiles) who are corporately united in him. The strong opening statement of praise and the absence of any theological polemics make Ephesians pervasively positive in tone. The clear division of the epistle into two halves of nearly equal length (namely, the doctrinal section in chs. 1–3 and the practical section in chs. 4–6) also provides a strong sense of structural unity.

Setting

An important port city on the west coast of Asia, Ephesus boasted the temple of Artemis (one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world). Just a few decades before Paul, Strabo called Ephesus the greatest emporium in the province of Asia Minor (Geography 12.8.15; cf. 14.1.20–26). However, the silting up of the harbor and the ravages of earthquakes caused the abandonment of the harbor city several centuries later. Today, among the vast archaeological remains, some key structures date from the actual time of the NT.



The Setting of Ephesians
(c. A.D. 62)

Ephesus was a wealthy port city in the Roman province of Asia. It was a center of learning and was positioned near several key land routes in western Asia Minor. Paul probably wrote his letter to the Ephesians while under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28).

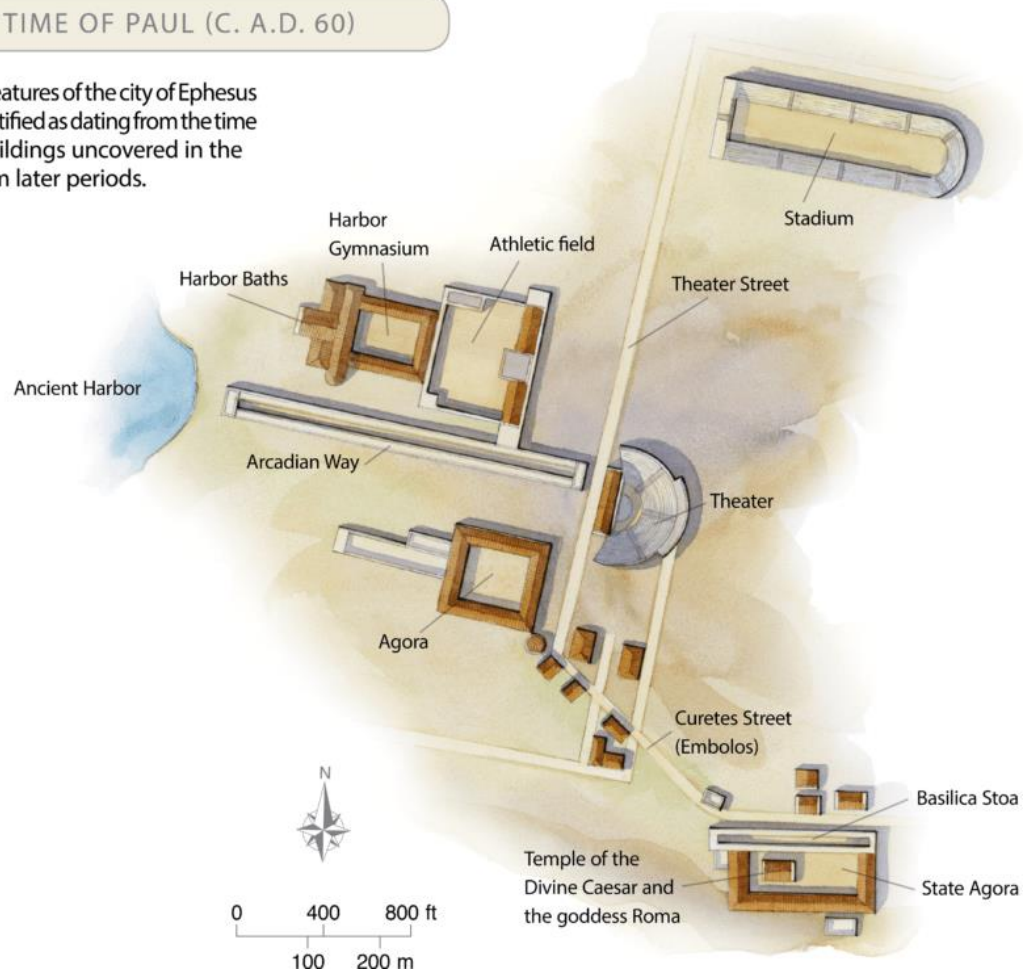
The grandiose theater, where citizens chanted “great is Artemis of the Ephesians” (Acts 19:29–40), had been enlarged under Claudius near the time when Paul was in the city. It held an estimated 20,000 or more spectators. The theater looked west toward the port. From the theater a processional way led north toward the temple of Artemis. In the fourth century b.c. the Ephesians proudly rebuilt this huge temple with their own funds after a fire, even refusing aid from Alexander the Great. The temple surroundings were deemed an official “refuge” for those fearing vengeance, and they played a central part in the economic prosperity of the city, even acting at times like a bank. A eunuch priest served the goddess Artemis, assisted by virgin women. Today very little remains of that once great temple beyond its foundations and a sizable altar, although the nearby museum displays two large statues of Artemis discovered elsewhere in Ephesus.

Other archaeologically extant religious structures include a post-NT temple of Serapis and several important imperial cult temples. Before Paul’s day, Ephesus had proudly obtained the right to host the Temple of the Divine Julius [Caesar] and the goddess Roma. The city later housed memorials to the emperors Trajan (A.D. 98–117) and Hadrian (A.D. 117–138); and it possessed a huge temple of Domitian (A.D. 81–96), which may have been constructed during the time the apostle John was in western Asia. Luke testifies to Jewish presence in Ephesus (Acts 18:19, 24; 19:1–10, 13–17), and this is confirmed by inscriptions and by literary sources (e.g., Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.39; *Jewish Antiquities* 14.262–264).

Civic structures during the time of Paul included the state agora (marketplace) with its stoa, basilica, and town hall. This spilled out onto Curetes Street, which contained several monuments to important citizens such as Pollio and Memmius. Curetes Street led to the commercial agora neighboring the theater; this large market square could be entered through the Mazaeus and Mithridates Gate (erected in honor of their patrons Caesar Augustus and Marcus Agrippa). Shops lined this agora and part of Curetes Street. A building across the street from the agora has frequently been called a brothel, although some have questioned this. On the way to the Artemis temple from the theater, one would have passed the huge stadium renovated or built under Nero (A.D. 54–68).

EPHESUS IN THE TIME OF PAUL (C. A.D. 60)

The city plan below shows those features of the city of Ephesus that archaeologists have so far identified as dating from the time of Paul. Many of the notable buildings uncovered in the excavation at Ephesus date from later periods.



The wealth of some residents of Ephesus is apparent in the lavish terrace houses just off Curetes Street. Later inscriptions mention a guild of silversmiths and even give the names of specific silversmiths (cf. Demetrius the silversmith, mentioned in Acts 19:24). However, as in most Roman cities, many people would have been in the servant class, and others would not have claimed much wealth. By the end of the second century (after the NT period) many other monumental structures were added, including some important gymnasia and the famous Library of Celsus. Remains of the giant Byzantine Church of Mary remind one that this former pagan town later hosted an important church council (the Council of Ephesus, A.D. 431).

Themes

There are two main themes of Ephesians: (1) Christ has reconciled all creation to himself and to God, and (2) Christ has united people from all nations to himself and to one another in his church. These great deeds were accomplished through the powerful, sovereign, and free working of the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and are recognized and received by faith alone through his grace. In light of these great truths, Christians are to lead lives that are a fitting tribute of gratitude to their great Lord.

1. All people are by nature spiritually dead, transgressors of God's law, and under the rule of Satan.
Eph. 1:7; 2:1–3, 5, 11–12
2. God predestined his elect to redemption and holiness in Christ according to the free counsel of his will.
Eph. 1:3–14; 2:4, 8–9
3. God's rich mercy in Christ has saved sinners; this free gift is by grace through faith alone.
Eph. 1:7–8; 2:4–14

4. Christ's earthly work of redemption was part of his cosmic reconciliation and exaltation in this age and the next.
Eph. 1:15–23; 3:1–13
5. Christ's reconciliation entails uniting all people, whether Jew or Gentile, into his one body, the church, as a new creation.
Eph. 1:23; 2:10–22; 3:1–21; 4:1–6
6. Christ's people are renewed to new lives of holiness in thought, word, and deed, and must reject their old, sinful lifestyles.
Eph. 4:1–3, 17–32; 5:1–20
7. Holiness of life entails submission to proper authorities, and loving and considerate care for those in submission.
Eph. 5:21–6:9
8. Christ has given powerful gifts to his church to bring about her unity, maturity, and defense against the onslaughts of the devil and his allies.
Eph. 4:7–16; 6:10–19

Background

There was no specific occasion or problem that inspired this letter, though Paul does mention that he desired the Ephesians to know how he was faring in confinement (Eph. 6:21–22). Ephesians articulates general instruction in the truths of the cosmic redemptive work of God in Christ; the unity of the church among diverse peoples; and proper conduct in the church, the home, and the world. Unity and love in the bond of peace mark the work of the Savior as well as Christians' grateful response to his free grace in their lives.

Ancient Ephesus forms an appropriate background to the book of Ephesians because of this city's fascination with magic and the occult (see Acts 19:19, and below). This helps explain Paul's emphasis on the power of God over all heavenly authorities and on Christ's triumphant ascension as head over the church and over all things in this age and the next. The Ephesians needed to be reminded of these things in order to remain resolute in their allegiance to Christ as the supreme power in the world and in their lives.

History of Salvation Summary

Christians have experienced in Christ the salvation and blessings that God promised through the ages, and look forward to the consummation of God's purposes in Christ.

Outline

Introduction (Eph. 1:1–14)

- A. Greetings (Eph. 1:1–2)
- B. Spiritual blessings in Christ (Eph. 1:3–14)

Paul's Prayer of Thanksgiving (Eph. 1:15–23)

- Salvation by Grace through Faith (Eph. 2:1–10)
- A. Hopelessness and helplessness without Christ (Eph. 2:1–3)
 - B. Hope in Christ (Eph. 2:4–10)

Unity and the Peace of Christ (Eph. 2:11–22)

- A. Unity of Christ's people (Eph. 2:11–15)
- B. Peace with God (Eph. 2:16–18)
- C. Implications of Christ's peace (Eph. 2:19–22)

Revelation of the Gospel Mystery (Eph. 3:1–13)

- A. Paul's apostolic ministry (Eph. 3:1–7)
- B. The mystery and wisdom (Eph. 3:8–13)

Paul's Prayer for Strength and Insight (Eph. 3:14–21)

Unity of the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:1–16)

- A. Exhortation to unity (Eph. 4:1–6)
- B. The different gifts (Eph. 4:7–10)
- C. The gifts for edification of the church (Eph. 4:11–16)

Paul's Testimony (Eph. 4:17–24)

Exhortation to an Edifying Lifestyle (Eph. 4:25–32)

New Life in Love (Eph. 5:1–20)

- A. Exhortation to self-sacrificial love (Eph. 5:1–2)
- B. Instruction in holy living (Eph. 5:3–20)

Submission to One Another (Eph. 5:21–6:9)

- A. Submission in general (Eph. 5:21)
- B. Wives and husbands (Eph. 5:22–33)
- C. Children and parents (Eph. 6:1–4)
- D. Slaves, bondservants, and masters (Eph. 6:5–9)

The Whole Armor of God (Eph. 6:10–20)

- A. The Lord's strength (Eph. 6:10–13)
- B. Standing firm (Eph. 6:14–17)
- C. Being constant in prayer (Eph. 6:18–20)

Conclusion (Eph. 6:21–24)¹

Other Resources to consider for your study of Ephesians:

Video Synopsis:

Introduction to Ephesians | Fast Facts: <https://youtu.be/LLHNX7pbnml>

Overview: Ephesians: <https://youtu.be/Y71r-T98E2Q>

Best Commentaries for Ephesians:

<https://www.challies.com/resources/best-commentaries-on-ephesians/>

<https://www.bestcommentaries.com/ephesians>

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INTRODUCTION TO LESSON 1

I read recently of a treasure-hunting company that found a sunken galleon with hundreds of millions of dollars worth of coins. Of course, no sooner had they announced their find than some government claimed that the treasure really belonged to them, not to the finders. But, I've often thought that searching for lost treasures would be a fun job.

The Christian life is really a treasure hunt as you progressively discover the vast wealth that already is yours because you are now in Christ. From the moment He saves you, God bequeaths on you, as Paul puts it, "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." Verse 3 is the opening topic phrase of a long sentence (in Greek) that runs down through verse 14. Some Greek scholars have called it one of the most complex Greek sentences in the entire Bible to sort out, as Paul piles phrase upon phrase to explain what some of those spiritual blessings are.

Throughout eternity we will go on discovering the riches of God's grace, which He lavished upon us (1:7-8). We are spiritually rich in Christ beyond our capacity to imagine. One of the most important things for your spiritual growth is to ask God to open the eyes of your heart so that you will know "what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (1:18).

*But, why does God lavish His blessings upon us? Is it all about us or is it about Him? One of the most important truths in Scripture to grasp is that God is passionate about His glory. John Piper explains this in many of his books, but especially in *God's Passion for His Glory* [Crossway Books], half of which is a reproduction of Jonathan Edwards' treatise, "The End for Which God Created the World." It is not an easy book to read (I have read it twice now), but it is worth grappling with! Edwards argues that because God is infinitely perfect, He must seek His own glory, because to seek the glory of any being or thing less perfect than God would be sin. For any creature, self-glorification is sin. But, because God is infinitely perfect, He would be unrighteous if He did not glory in that which is perfect, namely, in Himself. So, why does God bless us with every spiritual blessing in Christ? It is so that we may in turn bless and glorify Him, the giver of every good and perfect gift. Blessed by God, we bless God.²*

**Because God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,
we should bless God.**

OPEN IT

1. Describe a time when someone did something to bless you in an extravagant way? What did you do in response to the gesture?

² Sermon by Steve Cole found @ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-2-blessed-we-bless-ephesians-13>

READ IT

Ephesians 1:1-6

EXPLORE IT

2. Who is writing and to whom is this letter written to?
3. Where do the blessings God gives come from?
4. What took place before the foundation of the world?
5. What should our predestination and adoption cause us to do?

APPLY IT

How did we get here?

When the apostle Paul wanted to communicate important information to the believers who resided in the town of Ephesus, he wrote a letter, even though at the time he was imprisoned in Rome—in his own home. Acts 28:30-31 tells us, “Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him” (NKJV). Because of his imprisonment, Paul couldn’t visit the people he loved in Ephesus, but he could write them a letter. That’s what he did—and through the centuries we have benefited. The church at the city of Ephesus had been founded about seven years earlier by Paul on his homeward trip of his second missionary journey. On Paul’s third missionary journey, he stopped and stayed at Ephesus for about three years—from the summer of AD 52 until the spring of AD 55. In Paul’s letter, his heart was firmly rooted in wanting them to grow in their relationship with Christ. Some very significant things happened when Paul stayed in Ephesus on his third missionary journey.

Events While Paul Was in Ephesus recorded in Acts 19

- Paul stayed in Ephesus for three years.
- Paul baptized twelve followers of John the Baptist.
- Reasoned with people in the synagogue for three months, then daily in the hall of Tyrannus for two years.
- God healed people through Paul, even using his handkerchief and aprons at times.
- Seven sons of a Jewish priest tried to use Paul’s name to cast out a demon.
- Those who practiced magic were converted and burned their sorcery books.
- Paul’s reputation created a riot because Demetrius accused him of threatening to destroy Diana’s temple.

A few years later, Paul was sent as a prisoner to Rome, where he wrote this letter to the believers living in Ephesus. At that point, Paul had been a Christian for nearly thirty years. The letter was carried to the Ephesus area by Tychicus on his way from Rome to Colossae.*³

6. How might the events that transpired during Paul's time in Ephesus (Acts 19) affect the way we listen to his words in this letter?

7. Read Acts 20:17-36. How did Paul feel about the people of the Ephesian church and what concerned him most as he departed?

*In verse two we see Paul share "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." This is Paul's common greeting, but it is more than just a greeting. As Lloyd-Jones puts it (p. 36), "No two words are more important in the whole of our faith than 'grace' and 'peace.' Yet how lightly we tend to drop them off our tongues without stopping to consider what they mean. Grace is the beginning of our faith; peace is the end of our faith."*⁴

8. How are grace and peace interconnected to each other? Which of the two are most needed in your life at this moment? Why?

³ Miller, Kathy Collard. Paul and the Prison Epistles (The Smart Guide to the Bible Series) (Kindle Locations 196-214). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

⁴ Sermon by Steve Cole found @ <https://bible.org/node/22011>

The key thought in Ephesians is the phrase “in Christ.” Ephesians shows us that God is forming a new humanity through Christ, by the Spirit. It describes how Jesus Christ died for sinners, was raised, is exalted above all His competitors, and is now the head of the cosmos and the church. Through our union with Christ, we share in these same events—we are raised with Christ and seated with Him (2:5-7). This great salvation is owing to the grace of God (2:8-10). Observe also these “formerly . . . but now” expressions:

- We were dead in sin, but now we are “alive with the Messiah” (2:4).
- We were separated from Christ, but now in Christ Jesus we “have been brought near” (2:13).
- We were “foreigners,” but now we are “fellow citizens” (2:19). We were darkened in understanding, but now we have “learned about the Messiah.” We have put off the “old self” and put on the “new self” (4:20-24).
- We were “darkness,” but now we are “light in the Lord” (5:8).

Paul describes the transforming power of the gospel throughout the letter.⁵

9. **Take some time and write some words that would describe the “former you” before experiencing Christ’s saving grace. What words describe you after coming to Christ? Share some of both lists with your group.**

Furthermore, the doctrine of union with Christ does not make those things we often identify ourselves by—family, career, gender, sexuality—unimportant or meaningless. Far from it. Rather, our identity in Christ is a fundamental identity that claims every other identity that we could possibly have. Put another way, our identity in Christ is the lens through which every other identity becomes accountable. Hence, our identity in Christ will inform the way we express things like our gender or sexuality, ensuring that they are in virtuous conformity to His will. Union with Christ does not mean our work is meaningless, but rather prevents those things from becoming an idol we worship and define ourselves by.....To have an identity that is rooted in Christ will claim, cleanse, and control all other aspects of who we are. An identity in Christ will give renewed meaning, invigorating purpose, and God-glorifying direction to everything else we do in life.⁶

10. **Would those around you say they see Christ being lived out in your daily life? What areas do you struggle to live “in Christ” and what steps can be taken to change this?**

⁵ Merida, Tony. Exalting Jesus in Ephesians (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) . B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

⁶ <https://corechristianity.com/resource-library/articles/3-questions-about-what-it-means-to-be-in-christ/>

11. Issues of identity are prevalent today whether it involves how we see ourselves or others. How can seeing through God's eyes free us from seeking an identity on our own?

Before the World was Created...God had you on His mind!!!!

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 to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will

Ephesians 1:3-6 This amazing passage highlights God's gracious election of sinners for salvation. Paul says that God "chose us" (v. 4) and that He "predestined us" (v. 5). These words concern some people, making them tense up, but they should not. These are Bible words. These words should inspire awe and worship. The idea of God choosing a people to display His glory is not new. The Bible is a book of election.

- *God chose to create the world for His glory.*
- *God chose Abraham to bring blessing to the nations (Gen 12:1-3).*
- *God chose the nation of Israel that they might be a light to the nations (Deut 7:6-8; 14:2; Isa 42:6-8).*

Further, Jesus chose His 12 disciples to bear fruit and multiply (John 15:16). Paul adds that God chose what is "insignificant and despised in the world . . . so that no one can boast in His presence" (1 Cor 1:28-29). In Ephesians, as in other NT texts (cf. Rom 9-11; Acts 13:48; Titus 1:1; 1 Pet 1:1; 2 Pet 1:10), we read that God chose individuals for salvation. These believers, both Jew and Gentile, make up the church.⁷

Our church's own statement of faith declares the importance of this truth when it says:

Election is the gracious purpose of God, settled before the foundation of the world, as the basis on which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies and glorifies sinners. Election is consistent with the free agency of human beings and is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness. It excludes boasting and promotes humility. Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; Matthew 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; John 6:44-45,65; 15:16; 17:6; Romans 8:29-30; 11:5-7,26-36; Ephesians 1:4-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 1 Peter 1:2; 2:4-10.

12. How does the doctrine of election take our eyes off of us and move it to God and as verse 6 says "to the praise of His glorious grace?"

⁷ Merida, Tony. Exalting Jesus in Ephesians (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) . B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

A couple observations about the nature of election in this text:

First, we must admit great mystery in the doctrine of election.

This passage speaks about what God was doing “before the foundation of the world” (v. 4). It speaks of His eternal, secret purposes (vv. 5,10), and recognizes that He works all things according to “the decision of His will” (v. 11). We must admit mystery here. God is God and we are not....

Second, while we want to affirm mystery, we should also affirm the other attributes clearly affirmed in this text. In this text we see that God is perfectly loving (vv. 4-5), eternally sovereign (v. 5), gloriously gracious (vv. 6-8), and infinitely wise (v. 8). God can do whatever He pleases (Ps 115:3), and whatever He does is always consistent with who He is...

Third, the passage itself shows the necessity of personal belief in the gospel. This is true even if all of our questions about human responsibility (or will) are not answered in this passage. Look at verse 13: one must believe. Remember, this is the same sentence! Election and faith belong in the same sentence, and it is a sentence only God could write. We may not understand this, but we should fully embrace it...

Fourth, our election is in Christ. We are chosen in the “Chosen One” (Luke 9:35; 23:35). F. F. Bruce says, “He is the foundation, origin, and executor: all that is involved in election and its fruits depends on him” (Ephesians, 254–55). O’Brien summarizes, “Election is always and only in Christ” (Ephesians, 100). We were not chosen for anything good in us. God accepts us because He chose to put us in union with Christ...

Finally, in light of these things, election should humble us (cf. 1 Cor 1:27-30). The proper response to God’s having chosen us for salvation is awe, worship, and obedience to God. Election should not anger anyone or inflate anyone’s pride. It should humble everyone. No one should be arrogant when talking about the doctrine of election.⁸

13. How can the doctrine of election (predestination) be seen in a negative light even by the most devout of Christ followers? What are some common rebuttals to this doctrine? What about this truth should lead us to praise God?

14. If God “chose us before the foundation of the world” why should we spend any time on missions and evangelism? Use the quotes below from J.I. Packer’s “Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God” to guide your thoughts and discussion?

⁸ Merida, Tony. Exalting Jesus in Ephesians (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) . B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

“God’s way of saving men is to send out His servants to tell them the gospel, and the Church has been charged to go into all the world for that very purpose.”

“Evangelism is man’s work, but the giving of the faith is God’s.”

“The prayer of a Christian is not an attempt to force God’s hand, but a humble acknowledgement of helpless dependence...what we do every time we pray is to confess our own impotence and God’s sovereignty.”

What Says You?

C.H. Spurgeon was once asked if he could reconcile these two truths to each other. “I wouldn’t try,” he replied; “I never reconcile friends.” Friends? – yes, friends. This is the point that we have to grasp. In the Bible, divine sovereignty and human responsibility are not enemies. They are not uneasy neighbors; they are not in an endless state of cold war with each other. They are friends, and they work together.⁹

- 15. Think back to your path to becoming a Christian. Looking back can you see moments of God’s sovereignty in drawing you towards Him and the steps you took to believing the message you heard?**

We are people who have received a new name through adoption. Furthermore, the adoption, no matter how much it makes us feel good, was not intended primarily for that purpose. In the New Testament, adoptions brought glory to the person who adopts, not the one who is adopted. Adoption brings glory to God.¹⁰

- 16. All of this was done so that we might be adopted as His children. How does knowing that you are adopted in the family of God give you peace and comfort in the trials and temptations of life?**

⁹<https://gracequotes.org/quote/c-h-spurgeon-was-once-asked-if-he-could-reconcile-these-two-truths-to-each-other-i-wouldnt-try-he-replied-i-never-reconcile-friends-friends-yes-fr/>

¹⁰ When People are Big and God is Small, Ed Welch P&R Publishing, 1997, p. 161. Used by Permission.

When we initially accepted Christ, we were saved from sin's penalty. Christ received the full wrath for our sins on Himself. And the day will come when we step into glory that we will be saved from sin's presence. Yet right now we briefly tarry on earth existing in the tension between the two worlds. God has given us grace to overcome sin and become more like Jesus Christ which shows the life transforming power of the Gospel at work in us. So, we have been saved from sin's penalty. We are being saved from sin's power. And we will be saved from sin's presence.¹¹

17. The salvation God gives makes us positionally Holy and blameless, however practically we still struggle with temptation and sin. What areas in your life do you need God's help to experience practically what is true positionally?

18. In what tangible ways this week can you live differently in light of this new identity God has given us in Christ? What steps need to be taken for this to be a reality?

¹¹ Sermon by Randy Smith entitled The Basis for Spiritual Growth, found @ <https://gracequotes.org/topic/sanctification-positional/>
This study was compiled and questions were written by Tim Badal (Sugar Grove Campus)—www.villagebible.church/smallgroup