

Living for Christ
in a Fallen World

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Ephesians

This inductive Bible study is designed for individual, small group, or classroom use. A leader's guide with full lesson plans and the answers to the Bible study questions is available from Regular Baptist Press. Order RBP1676 online at www.regularbaptistpress.org, e-mail orders@rbpstore.org, call toll-free 1-800-727-4440, or contact your distributor.

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*The King James Version is the English translation used
in our Sunday School curriculum.*

The Doctrinal Basis of Our Curriculum

A more detailed statement with references is available upon request.

- The verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures
- Only one true God
- The Trinity of the Godhead
- The Holy Spirit and His ministry
- The personality of Satan
- The Genesis account of creation
- Original sin and the fall of man
- The virgin birth of Christ
- Salvation through faith in the shed blood of Christ
- The bodily resurrection and priesthood of Christ
- Grace and the new birth
- Justification by faith
- Sanctification of the believer
- The security of the believer
- The church
- The ordinances of the local church: baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper
- Biblical separation—ecclesiastical and personal
- Obedience to civil government
- The place of Israel
- The pretribulation rapture of the church
- The premillennial return of Christ
- The millennial reign of Christ
- Eternal glory in Heaven for the righteous
- Eternal torment in Hell for the wicked

LIVING FOR CHRIST IN A FALLEN WORLD: EPHESIANS

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Preface

The culture wars are heating up! It seems the Devil has strategically positioned anti-Christian forces in influential roles in an attempt to snuff out our Christian witness. These forces pervade university professorships, government chambers, newsrooms, and judicial courts. They team up to oppose genuine Christianity, alleging that we are narrow-minded exclusivists with divisive beliefs. They seem to thrive on the conviction that every reference to the Bible and every symbol of Christianity should be removed from public places.

For example, creationism and Intelligent Design are maligned as unacceptable religious views, whereas evolution is advanced as science. Even the word “theory” is being struck from the phrase “the theory of evolution” before it gets into textbooks.

How much longer will we be able to share the truth that God saves sinners by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ? Many politicians, media reporters, teachers, and judges call such teaching judgmental and inappropriate. But we call it truth, and the Bible implores us to make this truth known.

By God’s grace we win the culture wars one battle at a time, but we must seize each opportunity to represent Christ daily and clearly. As Paul explained to the Ephesians, believers enjoy abundant blessings but bear a great responsibility to live righteously in every relationship. We must talk about our Savior’s power to save, but we must also serve as examples of our message.

As you study this series of lessons, may your appreciation of what you have in Christ deepen, and may your effectiveness for Him increase!

Lesson 1

Count Your Blessings!

*Believers thank God for salvation
by leading holy lives.*

Ephesians 1:1–5

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3).

Picture it—a star football running back scores his third touchdown in a playoff game. While the fans scream their appreciation, the player autographs the ball and hands it to a physically challenged boy in a nearby wheelchair section. The player has made that event a time the boy will never forget. As long as he lives, the boy will surely cherish the moment the running back singled him out of the crowd and gave him a prized possession.

The apostle Paul’s letter to the Ephesians focuses on God’s grace revealed to us in the gift of salvation and the many spiritual benefits that accompany it. Each of us probably remembers the day we trusted in Christ, and we should always cherish the blessings we possess because of Him.

Getting Started

1. Has someone you greatly admired honored you? If so, what was the honor?

2. How has that honor affected your life?

Searching the Scriptures

A Word about Ephesus

Asia, the world's largest continent, covers more than seventeen million square miles and is home to 60 percent of the world's population. In New Testament times, the name "Asia" referred to the western one-third of what we know as Turkey. At one time Asia was part of Asia Minor. Many Greeks settled there, and for a while it resembled a second Greece. Later the Romans conquered the country and made it part of the Roman Empire.

Ephesus, the largest city in the province of Asia and also its capital, was situated on the main thoroughfare between the East and the West. Because it became a great trading city, people from across the Near East settled there, causing it to become quite cosmopolitan. Jews and Gentiles rubbed shoulders in the city's streets.

Although beautiful and wealthy, Ephesus was home to spiritually impoverished men and women of unbridled religious fervor. Its two most famous structures were a stadium and the temple of Diana (Artemis), located outside the city gates. The Greeks considered the temple of Diana to be one of the Seven Wonders of the World. It measured about 425 feet long and 239 feet wide and was made of dazzling marble. Its roof rested on 120 pillars, each 55 feet high.

The stadium, then the largest in the Greek world, held twenty-five thousand spectators who gathered frequently to watch races and witness wild-beast fights.

3. What contrasts do you see between your community's cultural or architectural achievements and its spiritual condition?

Paul, the Writer

After briefly visiting Ephesus to gauge future church-planting possibilities, Paul left Aquila and Priscilla to prepare the ground. However,

on Paul's third missionary journey, he returned and spent several years there. In fact, he stayed in Ephesus three years (Acts 20:31), a longer time than he had spent in any other city. His letter to the Ephesian Christians is therefore warm, personal, and fraternal.

While at Ephesus, Paul baptized a dozen disciples of John the Baptist (19:1–7), spoke boldly in the synagogue about the kingdom of God (v. 8), continued his discussions in the school of Tyrannus (vv. 9, 10), performed miracles (vv. 11, 12), witnessed the conversion of many sorcerers (vv. 18, 19), saw the Word of God make inroads into many lives (v. 20), and became the object of a mass riot (vv. 23–41). He knew firsthand that the gospel infuses grace into the hearts of some who hear it but inflames evil passions in others.

Greetings

Writing around AD 60–62 from prison in Rome (Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; 6:20), Paul identified himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ (1:1). The word “apostle” means “sent one.” Christ had sent Paul into the Greek and Roman world to share the gospel with others.

4. According to verse 1, to what did Paul attribute his apostleship?

5. Why would this truth help Paul maintain an attitude of gratitude while he was in prison for serving God?

6. What is true of the heart of the person who complains about serving God?

Paul addressed his letter to “the saints which are at Ephesus” (v. 1). The term “saint” designates a holy one or one set apart to God. Every believer is a saint, although not every believer acts saintly all the time. The saints in Ephesus were “faithful in Christ Jesus” (v. 1). They demonstrated their faith in Him. Paul wished the Ephesian believers grace and

peace, and he cited the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ as the givers of both (v. 2).

Like the Ephesian saints, we are “in Christ” and also in a geographic location. Our “Ephesus” may be a small town, a rural village, a midsize urban city, or a large city. Whatever we say or do in our “Ephesus” should reflect the truth that Christ lives in us.

Verses 3–14 form one unusually long, unbroken sentence in the original language. If you want to get the effect of such a sentence, take a deep breath and try to read the entire passage before you take another breath. You will quickly get an idea of how much content Paul crammed into this one sentence as he focused on some of the blessings we have from God.

God Chose Us!

Verse 3 encourages us to bless, or praise, God, because He has granted us favors, or blessings.

7. Name just five of the many blessings believers receive in Christ.

8. What does blessing God look like in the lives of believers?

Verses 4 and 5 describe two important blessings that believers enjoy in Christ. First, we see that God chose us! After we believe on Jesus Christ, we discover that God began to work on our behalf long before we believed. “Before the foundation of the world” (v. 4), God took the first step. We will never understand the mystery of how God chose us and we “chose” Him, but we cannot miss His purpose in choosing us.

9. Read Ephesians 1:4. Why did God choose us?

10. God's purpose for choosing us affects certain parts of our lives. What are those parts?

11. Does the average unbeliever see holy living as a desirable lifestyle? Explain.

Holy living is the best life a person can live. However, our world tries to sell us on what God would consider an evil lifestyle.

Peter commented on holy living in his first epistle. He wrote, "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation [way of living]; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I [God] am holy" (1 Peter 1:15, 16).

Holiness and evil are poles apart. We must abhor evil and flee temptation so we can reflect God's holiness. Further, we must heed and obey God's Word. It teaches us to walk in God's ways (Psalm 119:105, 133).

We should not think that "blamelessness" and "sinlessness" are synonyms. We will not be sinless until we see Jesus face-to-face (1 John 3:2), but we can be blameless today and every day. Being blameless means no one can legitimately accuse us of wrongdoing. Blameless believers live above reproach.

Someone observed that we should live in such a way that we would not be afraid to sell our talking parrot to the town gossip!

12. Do you believe God chose you because you deserved salvation? Explain your answer.

God Predestinated Us!

Ephesians 1:5 points out another of God's blessings. He predestinated us. "Predestinate" means "to lay out a plan ahead of time." Verse 4 ends with the words "in love"; however, it seems these words should begin verse 5. "In love" God laid out a plan whereby He would adopt us into His family (cf. Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5). We cannot fathom such love, a love that destined Jesus to shed His blood for us, but we can appreciate such love. And we can marvel that God planned to adopt us as His children. This adoption comes "by Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 1:5).

13. What things change for a child after he or she is adopted into a family?

14. How is the adoption of a child like God's adoption of believers?

Paul's word "adoption" identifies us as full-grown, mature, responsible sons and daughters. God foreordained all of these family benefits "according to the good pleasure of his will" (v. 5).

15. Read 2 Samuel 9. Who received virtual adoption into King David's family?

16. What benefits did this "adopted son" receive from King David?

17. What similar benefits do you have because God has adopted you?

18. What divine characteristics do you see reflected in King David's treatment of the person he "adopted"?

Making It Personal

The topics of election and predestination have captivated theologians for centuries. Debates about both topics rage in Bible college and seminary classrooms and in dormitories, as well as in Sunday School classes and home Bible study groups. We may never understand all that is involved in God's choice and predestination, but we can understand clearly how God's chosen and predestined people ought to live. We should be "holy and without blame before him" (Ephesians 1:4).

19. Your thankfulness for salvation can be measured by how holy you have lived. Think about how holy your life has been. How thankful for salvation have you been?

20. Jesus prayed that the Father would "sanctify" us (make us holy) by His Word (John 17:17). How will you apply God's Word to your life this week so you will become more holy and blameless?

21. Thank God for your salvation every day this week. Plan to tell five people in person that you are thankful for your salvation. Write those five names here. After the week is over, record how expressing verbal gratitude for your salvation affected your life.

22. Memorize Ephesians 1:3 and use it as a reminder of the blessings you have in God.