

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

February 28, 2024

Series - The Life and Writings of the Apostle Paul

Introduction to the Prison Epistles

Introduction to Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

Ephesians – Chapter One

Introduction to the Prison Epistles

I. When?

A. Where do the Prison Epistles fit chronologically with the rest of Paul's writings?

<u>Letter to</u>	<u>Approx. Date</u>	<u>Where From</u>
Galatians (region; churches)	Possibly 49 AD	Possibly Antioch
1 Thessalonians (city; church)	51 AD	Corinth
2 Thessalonians (city; church)	51 AD	Corinth
1 Corinthians (city; church)	55 AD	Ephesus
2 Corinthians (city; church)	57 AD	Philippi (in Macedonia)
Romans (city; no church yet)	58 AD	Corinth
Ephesians (city; saints)	61 AD	Rome (prison)
Philippians (city; saints)	61 AD	Rome (prison)
Colossians (city; saints)	61 AD	Rome (prison)
Philemon (person; in Colosse)	61 AD	Rome (prison)
1 Timothy (pastor)	63 AD	Poss. Macedonia; possibly Laodicea
Titus (pastor)	65 AD	Possibly Necropolis (Macedonia)
2 Timothy (pastor)	67 AD	Rome (2 nd time in prison)
Hebrews (the Jews)	61 or 67?	Rome

B. What were the events preceding Paul's imprisonment?

The events that led up to Paul's imprisonment begin in Acts 20 at the conclusion of his third missionary journey. He had met with the leaders of the church at Ephesus at Miletus (Acts 20:17) and after giving them instruction took sail ultimately ending up in Jerusalem. There he met with James and the elders from the church he entered the temple because of a purification ceremony

that he was participating in with four other men. There he was recognized by some Jews from Asia which caused an uproar in the temple (Acts 21:15 – 30). Paul would have been most likely killed by the Jews had not Lysius the chief captain rescued him until he could figure out what was going on. He was eventually brought to Caesarea to appear before Governor Felix (Acts 24). There, Paul could witness to Felix and his wife, but Felix leaves him under house arrest with some liberties for two years.

After Felix is replaced by Festus as governor, Paul appeals to him. Festus wants Paul to go back to Jerusalem and appear before him with the Jews present. Paul then appeals unto Caesar. Festus then allows Paul to present his case to King Agrippa who was “almost” persuaded to be a Christian.

After this, Paul was delivered to Rome on a ship. After a long voyage and a shipwreck that landed them on the isle of Melita for three months, Paul finally arrives at Rome where he stays in his own “hired house” guarded by the Praetorian Guard, which was responsible for protecting Caesar. It is here that he writes the Prison Epistles. It is not clear whether he ever appears before Augustus, but apparently, he is released after two years.

He will be imprisoned again in Rome 6 years later, this time by Nero in the Mamartine Prison, which was a horrible place according to historians; and this is when he writes 2 Timothy.

II. Why Was Paul Imprisoned?

A. Because of His Passion

Paul had a passion for the people of Israel. He wanted to reach them more than anything else.

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. (Romans 10:1)

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: (Romans 9:1-3)

B. Because of His Persistence

1. Warned by his History (Acts 20:22 & 23)
2. Warned by Disciples of Tyre (Acts 21:4)
3. Warned by Agabus (Acts 21:10 – 12)
4. Warned by the Lord (Acts 22:17 – 22)

C. Because of His Principle (Acts 7:54 – 8:3)

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.
(Galatians 6:7)

Background Information

1. Paul had briefly visited Ephesus on his 2nd missionary journey. (Acts 18:18 – 22)
2. Paul returned to Ephesus and stayed there for three years during his 3rd missionary journey. (Acts 19; 20:17 – 31)
3. Though Paul is writing this letter while he is imprisoned in Rome, there is not a hint of complaining from him regarding his situation.
4. This letter was intended to have a broader audience than just the people and church at Ephesus:
 - a. It does not contain many problems as does his letters to Corinth.
 - b. It does not contain as much personal information as some of his other letters do.
 - c. It is included in the Canon of Scripture.
5. Ephesus was a large city with:
 - a. The Temple of Diana - 425 feet long' 239 feet wide, 55 feet high, and 100 columns. The temple contained many statues and paintings.
 - b. A 30,000 seat theatre
 - c. It was the center of Pagan culture.

Leaders of the church at Ephesus included:

- a. Aquila (and Priscilla)
- b. Paul (for 3 years)
- c. Timothy
- d. The Apostle John (Historical tradition tells us that John was the pastor at Ephesus both before and after his imprisonment on the Isle of Patmos. (Revelation 2:1 – 7))

Ephesians One

Memory Verse - Ephesians 1:7

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;”

I. Paul Establishes His Sanctioned Power (Authority) (vs. 1 – 2)

A. He is an Apostle

"Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 9:1-2)

1. Personally called by the Lord (Galatians 1:1)

"Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)" (Galatians 1:1)

2. Witnessed the Resurrected Lord (1 Corinthians 15:4 – 8)

"And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." (1 Corinthians 15:4-8)

3. Endued with special authority and gifts

B. He is an Ambassador

Paul was writing this letter to the Ephesians (and to us) on behalf of God.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." (2 Corinthians 5:17-20)

Note – These introductory verses to the letter to the Ephesians are shorter and more impersonal than some of Paul's other letters, possibly since this particular letter is intended for a much broader audience than just the Ephesians.

II. Paul Explains God's Sovereign Plan (vs. 3 – 14)

Notice the sentence structure of Paul's letters. In this section (vs. 3 – 14) there are only three sentences. Paul uses long, wordy sentences. In fact, in the entire first chapter there are only five sentences. The entire last section is one long sentence spanning nine verses.

A. God's Plan Involves a Body (the Church - v. 10; v. 22)

Notice the use of plural pronouns throughout this portion of Scripture. These verses clearly pertain to the church corporately. These verses speak not of the local church, but the body of all believers which will be gathered and complete in Heaven after the Rapture.

B. God's Plan Includes Faith (vs. 12 – 13)

C. God's Plan Inspires Praise (v. 6; v. 12; v. 14)

D. God's Plan Infuses Eternal Security (vs. 12 – 14)

The word "earnest" means down-payment or deposit. God has given us the indwelling (sealing) of the Holy Spirit as a down payment. There are far greater spiritual blessings to come in those "heavenly places".

Notice in this section the use of the words predestinated and chosen. These words do not imply that a person is chosen or predestinated by God to go to Hell. God is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9; John 3:16; Matthew 9:36).

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

"But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." (Matthew 9:36)

Why would Jesus weep over people that He pre-ordained for Hell?

People choose to go to Hell by refusing to turn in repentance and faith from their sin and unbelief to the Saviour. Remember, these verses in Ephesians speak of a body (a church), which is made up of people who chose to trust Christ. The elect includes the "whosoever wills." Notice that we are predestinated:

1. according to His will and purpose (v. 5; v. 11)
2. according to the foreknowledge of God (1 Peter 1:2)

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied." (1 Peter 1:2)

3. to be conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29)

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." (Romans 8:29)

III. Paul Expresses a Special Prayer (vs. 15 – 23)

Paul has prayed for the Ephesians since before he lived there that God would enlighten them and give them understanding in regard to:

A. His Calling (v. 18; Ephesians 4:4; 2 Timothy 1:9; Hebrews 3:1) – not a specific calling to do something, but a call to a relationship with Him.

"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began," (2 Timothy 1:9)

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;" (Hebrews 3:1)

B. His Inheritance (v. 18; v. 11; v. 14; Colossians 1:12)

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:" (Colossians 1:12)

C. His Power (v. 19; Philippians 3:10)

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;" (Philippians 3:10)