

Ephesians

Jew-Gentile Unity Shown in Love								
Unity as Equals				Love as Testimony				
Chapters 1–3				Chapters 4–6				
Doctrine				Application				
Position				Practice				
Belief				Behaviour				
Privileges				Responsibilities				
Salutation 1:1-2	Position 1:3-23	Reconciliation 2	Uniqueness 3	Unity 4:1-16	Holiness 4:17-5:20	Submission 5:21-6:9	Reliance 6:10-20	Love 6:21-24
Rome								
Fall AD 60 (first Roman imprisonment)								

Key Word: Unity

Key Verses: “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (4:1-3).

Summary Statement: The way to *unity for believing Jews and Gentiles* is to see their equality and love one another as a witness to the world.

Application:

Do you *really* act like you are equal with other members of the body of Christ?

- Maids?
- Former Muslims (Malays)?
- Believers in Prison?
- Poor churches of India, Myanmar, Bangladesh, etc.?

How do you show your unity with believers different from you?

Ephesians

Introduction

- I. **Title** The title (*Ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς Ἐφεσούς* *To the Ephesians*) is found on *all* Greek manuscripts (cf. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 37), including the oldest extant manuscript, *p*⁴⁶ (ca. AD 200). However, Marcion (AD 140) entitled the letter *To the Laodiceans* which led some scholars to believe the letter was intended to be a circular epistle to various churches of which Ephesus was chief (Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 601).

II. Authorship

- A. **External Evidence:** All of the early church fathers believed that Paul wrote Ephesians. However, most modern scholars have nearly the opposite response.
1. Ephesians had wide circulation early in the second century as it appeared in the heretic Marcion's canon (ca. AD 140), which only considered Paul's writings authoritative. It also was included among the Pauline writings in the Muratorian canon (ca. AD 180) and the Latin and Syriac versions of the fourth century (Guthrie, 480).
 2. Contrary to the overwhelming patristic evidence, in recent centuries Ephesians has probably been the most disputed Pauline epistle, beginning with Erasmus (16th century) and especially the 19th century radical German schools (Guthrie, 482f.; Kümmel, 357f.; Hiebert, 2:257f.).
- B. **Internal Evidence:** The epistle itself strongly supports Pauline authorship, as it makes this direct claim (1:1; 3:1), has affinities to Colossians in content and vocabulary (Guthrie, 481, 491-92), is consistent with Pauline doctrine, and has Paul's normal structure of greeting, thanksgiving, doctrinal portion, ethical exhortations, closing greeting, and benediction.

Despite the internal evidence for Pauline authorship, many scholars see Ephesians as only written in his name by someone else for several reasons: linguistic and stylistic differences compared to other Pauline writings, the belief that people in Paul's day often wrote in another's name, the impersonal form (e.g., no terms of endearment, lack of greetings to specific individuals) that does not address any concrete situation, the allusions to the author not knowing the recipients (1:15; 3:2; 4:21), lack of the words "in Ephesus" (1:1) in the oldest manuscripts, the first-person references which "appear forced," and supposed theological differences with Pauline doctrine (M. Barth, 38, 41-44; Kümmel, 358f. answered by Guthrie, 482f.). However, a closer look at each of these arguments renders them often speculative and certainly inadequate to overthrow the unanimous external evidence and weighty internal factors.

III. Circumstances

- A. **Date:** Acceptance of Pauline authorship and close affinities to Colossians and Philippians suggest that he wrote Ephesians during the same house arrest from AD 60-62 (cf. Acts 28:30-31). Hoehner dates it in the fall AD 60. Since Philemon was also written during the same confinement, these four letters (Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon) are known as the "prison epistles." The liberal dating (AD 80-100) assumes non-Pauline authorship for the reasons mentioned above.
- B. **Origin/Recipients:** Paul wrote to the Ephesian church while in bondage in Rome, seen in two direct references (3:1; 4:1) and mention of his chains (6:20). Church tradition as well as the text (1:1) and the early title support an Ephesian destination. A textual problem in which some manuscripts (e.g., *p*⁴⁶ *κ*^{*} *B*^{*} 424^c 1739) lack the phrase "in Ephesus" (1:1) is not problematic since all manuscripts contain the title and several good manuscripts do contain the phrase (*A κ^c B³ D F G Byz Latin Syriac Coptic*). However, it may be that this letter was written as a circular letter for all of Asia originally sent to Ephesus as the capital city, which could explain the lack of greetings to specific individuals.

- C. Occasion: Paul had invested over two years teaching at Ephesus on his third missionary journey (Sep. 53-early spring 56; Acts 19). Within four years he was imprisoned in Rome. While there he wrote his epistle to the Colossian church which Tychicus probably carried with the letter to Philemon since Onesimus accompanied him (Col. 4:7-9). It makes sense that since Tychicus would pass through Ephesus en route to Colosse that he could also deliver a letter to the Ephesians (Eph. 6:21-22) unless the Ephesian letter was written one year earlier as proposed by Hoehner. As to why Paul felt the need to write the Ephesian church, different opinions exist below.

IV. Characteristics

- A. The purpose of the epistle has been explained in many ways:
1. "Ephesians is a manifesto of the love and mission of God to the world of which God's people are to be exponents" (Markus Barth, 1:56).
 2. Markus Barth gives other less acceptable purposes that assume non-Pauline authorship (1:57f.): a cover letter for the rest of the Pauline epistles (E. Goodspeed), a letter countering the competition in Asia Minor by John's and Peter's writings (K. H. von Weizsäcker), a discourse on baptism for new converts (N. A. Dahl), a defense against second century Gnosticism (F. C. Baur), etc.
 3. Believers living in a spiritually beggarly existence must appropriate their wealth in Christ (*TTTB*, 399). Paul's purpose is "to make Christians more aware of their position in Christ and to motivate them to draw upon their spiritual source in daily living: 'walk worthy of the calling with which you were called' (4:1; see 2:10)" (*TTTB*, 402).
 4. His aim is to encourage Jews and Gentiles to love one another since they are one in Christ (Hoehner, *BKC*, 2:614). This is supported by the eventual loss of their first love for Christ (Rev. 2:4) and the 19 occurrences of the noun or verb for "love" (*ἀγάπη ἀγαπάω*) out of only 107 in all of Paul's writings.
- B. Ephesians contains the most complete description of demonology (2:2; 6:11-16) in all of Paul's writings. Even more significant is his emphasis on the person and work of the Holy Spirit (1:13-14; 2:18; 3:5, 16; 4:3-4, 30; 5:18; 6:17-18).
- C. This letter contains more doctrinal and exhortative material in the form of prayers than any other New Testament writing (M. Barth, 1:58-59).
- D. Ephesians has the longest sentences of any NT writing with eight lengthy sentences (1:3-14, 15-23; 2:1-7; 3:1-13, 14-19; 4:1-7, 11-16; 6:14-20), the first of which scholars have thought to be the most cumbersome sentence in the Greek language (Hoehner, *BKC*, 2:616)!
- E. Ephesians gives the fullest explanation of the unity between Jews and Gentiles of any NT writing. This joint-body in Christ is the "mystery" hidden since OT times (3:1-13).

Argument

A key to the argument of Paul's letter to the Ephesians can be found in the distinction between the many references to two groups designated as "we" (1:11) and "you" (1:13; 2:1). Since the "you" clearly refers to Gentiles (2:11; 3:1) who were far away from God (2:13), by "we" Paul has in mind Jews like himself who are part of the people of Israel and possess the covenants of promise.

This Jew-Gentile distinction is important since the original readers of the letter were mostly Ephesian Gentiles, as they are the only group addressed (1:13; 3:1). Paul, in effect, wrote this epistle to encourage these Gentile believers of their new standing in Christ as equal heirs with Jewish Christians. His passion was that both groups would work together for the Lord as a testimony to the world. The manner in which this purpose is accomplished is to first lay the doctrinal foundation of the Jew-Gentile unity (Eph 1-3), then the practical implications for this new entity of both Jews and Gentiles called the Church (Eph 4-6).

Synthesis

Jew-Gentile unity shown in love

1–3	Unity as equals
1:1-2	Salutation
1:3-23	Position
1:3-14	Praise for blessings
1:15-23	Prayer for understanding
2	Reconciliation
2:1-10	Individually
2:11-21	Corporately
3	Uniqueness
3:1-13	Mystery
3:14-21	Prayer for unity in love
4–6	Love as testimony
4:1-16	Unity
4:17–5:20	Holiness
5:21–6:9	Submission/headship in...
5:21	All of life
5:22–6:4	Home
5:22-24	Wives
5:25-33	Husbands
6:1-3	Children
6:4	Fathers
6:5-9	Workplace
6:5-8	Subordinates
6:9	Bosses
6:10-20	Reliance upon God
6:21-24	Love

Outline

Summary Statement for the Book

The way to unity for believing Jews and Gentiles is to see their equality and love one another as a witness to the world.

- I. **God is glorified by removing Jew-Gentile barriers to have equal standing in the Church (Eph 1–3).**
 - A. Jesus called Paul as an apostle so Paul greets the Ephesian church with God's blessing to affirm the divine authority of the letter (1:1-2).
 - B. God gave Gentile believers have equal status with predestined Jews so Paul prays that they might grasp this to get to know God better (1:3-23).
 1. Paul praises God that Christ gives Jews and Gentiles every spiritual blessing so his Gentile readers grasp their equality to predestined Jews (1:3-14).
 2. Paul prays that his Gentile readers would comprehend their exalted position in Christ for them to get to know God better (1:15-23; cf. v. 17b).
 - C. God's love removed the depraved state and separation from Israel by Gentile believers and reconciled both groups in the Church (Eph 2).
 1. God's work of grace for depraved Gentiles gave them a new position and openness to God by his love, mercy, and grace (2:1-10).
 2. All being saved by grace reconciled Jews and Gentiles together in one body despite their former separation (2:11-21).

- D. The Jew-Gentile union was first revealed in this age so Paul prays that their love and unity might glorify God (Eph 3).
1. The Jew-Gentile union in the Church is a mystery revealed in the Church Age and a unique privilege by God's grace (3:1-13).
 2. Paul prays that his readers would have power and insight into God's great love to strengthen their love to glorify God (3:14-21).

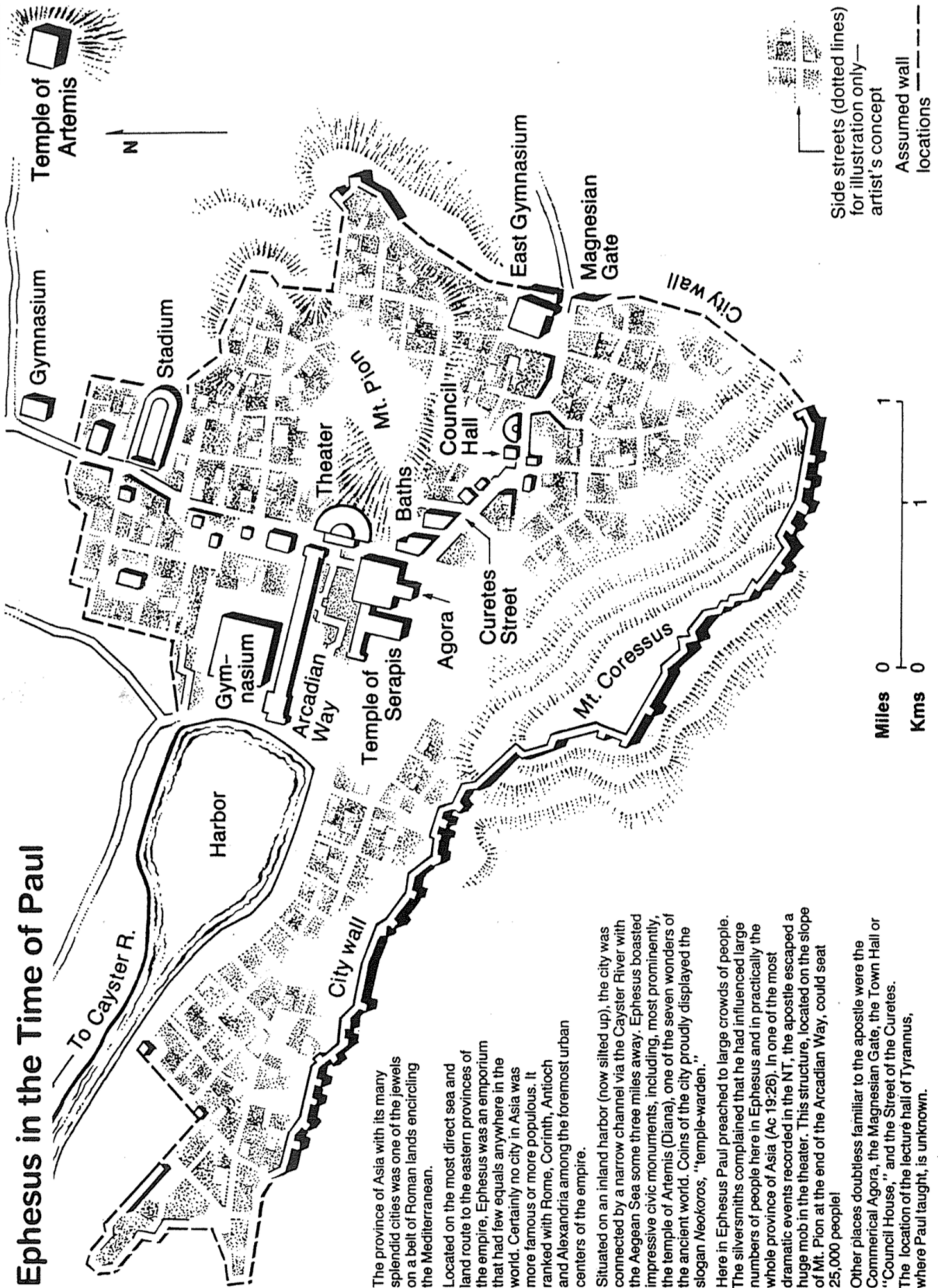
II. Practical Christian love shows Jew-Gentile unity as a testimony to the world (Eph 4–6).

- A. The church must serve one another under God's gifted servants to reach its full potential in Christ-likeness (4:1-16).
- B. Believers must exchange their old lifestyles with a righteous walk in the power of the Holy Spirit to shine before a depraved world (4:17–5:20).
- C. Believers must submit to authority at church, home, and work to show that their new life in Christ transforms every relationship (5:21–6:9).
- D. Believers must rely on God and his provisions to defeat Satan since they cannot proclaim Christ in their own power (6:10-20).
- E. Closing remarks encourage the church to request further information from Tychicus and to love one another (6:21-24).

Ephesus in the Time of Paul

Bible Visual Resource Book, 243

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Ephesians

Ephesus in the Time of Paul

The province of Asia with its many splendid cities was one of the jewels on a belt of Roman lands encircling the Mediterranean.

Located on the most direct sea and land route to the eastern provinces of the empire, Ephesus was an emporium that had few equals anywhere in the world. Certainly no city in Asia was more famous or more populous. It ranked with Rome, Corinth, Antioch and Alexandria among the foremost urban centers of the empire.

Situated on an inland harbor (now silted up), the city was connected by a narrow channel via the Cayster River with the Aegean Sea some three miles away. Ephesus boasted impressive civic monuments, including, most prominently, the temple of Artemis (Diana), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Coins of the city proudly displayed the slogan *Neokoros*, "temple-warden."

Here in Ephesus Paul preached to large crowds of people. The silversmiths complained that he had influenced large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia (Ac 19:26). In one of the most dramatic events recorded in the NT, the apostle escaped a huge mob in the theater. This structure, located on the slope of Mt. Pion at the end of the Arcadian Way, could seat 25,000 people!

Other places doubtless familiar to the apostle were the Commercial Agora, the Magnesian Gate, the Town Hall or "Council House," and the Street of the Curetes. The location of the lecture hall of Tyrannus, where Paul taught, is unknown.

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Ephesian Theatre



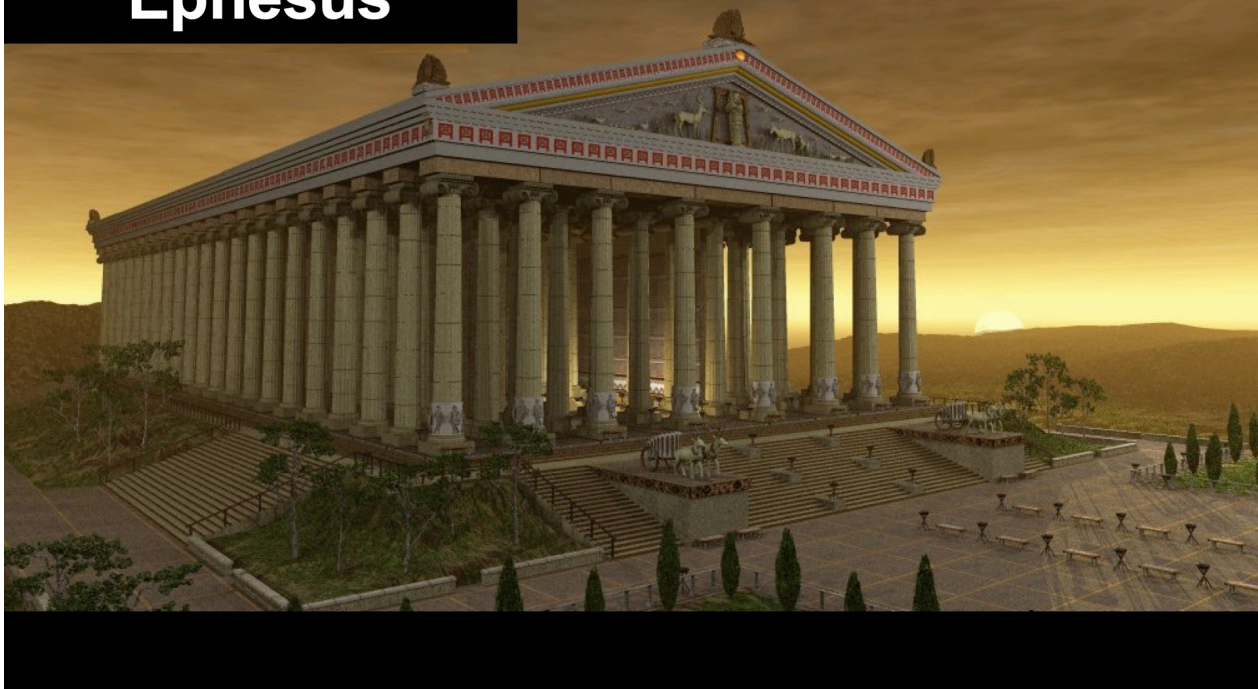
The Great Theatre at Ephesus lay at the end of the Arcadian Way, which itself extended from the harbor silted up by Paul's day. It could seat an audience of 25,000 and figured prominently in Acts 19:29 when the city clerk ended a theatre riot that nearly claimed the lives of two of Paul's traveling companions.

Prejudice at Ephesus

While on the cross, Jesus placed his mother Mary into John's care (John 19:26-27). Church tradition records that John fulfilled this request by bringing her to Ephesus where he ministered until his death, except for some time on Patmos where John receive the Revelation. This city of Jew-Gentile issues ironically was the place where the mother of Jesus lived out her days to serve all people.

<p>Key Word 175</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Unity</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ephesians</p>	<p>Theme 23</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Jew-Gentile Unity Shown in Love</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ephesians</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Sometimes Christians mistreat others of a different ethnic group</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <th style="background-color: black; color: white;">Jews</th> <th style="background-color: black; color: white;">Gentiles</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: red; color: white;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ One God ■ Many taboos </td> <td style="background-color: red; color: white;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Many Gods ■ Few taboos </td> </tr> </table> 	Jews	Gentiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ One God ■ Many taboos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Many Gods ■ Few taboos 		
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<p>East Meets West</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Hebrew Writing Style Greek</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="background-color: red; color: white;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Favors poetry, imagery & symbolism </td> <td style="background-color: red; color: white;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Favors outlines, lists and bullet points </td> </tr> </table> <p style="font-size: small;">Adapted from Lynne M. Thompson, "Christmas: The Real Deal," interview with Ray Vander Laan, Breakaway magazine (Dec 2003): 7-9.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Favors poetry, imagery & symbolism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Favors outlines, lists and bullet points 	<p>East Meets West</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Hebrew Numbers Greek</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="background-color: red; color: white;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sees numbers as a quality or symbol </td> <td style="background-color: red; color: white;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sees numbers as a specific quantity </td> </tr> </table> <p style="font-size: small;">Adapted from Lynne M. Thompson, "Christmas: The Real Deal," interview with Ray Vander Laan, Breakaway magazine (Dec 2003): 7-9.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sees numbers as a quality or symbol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sees numbers as a specific quantity 	<p>East Meets West</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Hebrew Relation to God Greek</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="background-color: red; color: white;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Focuses on the community in relationship with God </td> <td style="background-color: red; color: white;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Focuses on the individual's relationship with God </td> </tr> </table> <p style="font-size: small;">Adapted from Lynne M. Thompson, "Christmas: The Real Deal," interview with Ray Vander Laan, Breakaway magazine (Dec 2003): 7-9.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Focuses on the community in relationship with God 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Focuses on the individual's relationship with God
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79	80	81						

The Temple of Artemis at Ephesus



ARTEMISION (THE TEMPLE OF ARTEMIS)

The Temple of Artemis which was considered as one of the Seven Wonders of the World by the writers of the antique world was built in the southwest of the hill called Ayasuluk. Today, only a few pieces of marble and a single column are seen there.

The source of the Artemis cult goes back to Cybele, the mother goddess of Anatolia. The Artemis of Ephesus bears many features of this very old and, at the same time, extremely interesting Anatolian mother goddess. During the excavations, four building phases going back to the 8. th century B. C. other than the present one were identified. The temple of Artemis

was built according to the plans of architect Chersiphron from Crete and his son Metagenes during the first half of the 6. th century B. C. on older temples. On the western side of this temple with the dimensions of 55 m. x 110 m. there are columns with their drums decorated with reliefs given as gift by the Lydian King Croesus.

About two hundred years later after the building of this temple it was burned by a lunatic called Herostratos, who wanted to be mentioned in history, on the night when Alexander the Great was born (356 B. C.). The Ephesians decided to build a larger and more magnificent temple in place of the burned one. The new temple was started to be built on a platform of 3 meters high by the architect Cheroocrates.

Alexander the Great wanted to give

financial aid to the temple which was not completed in 334 B. C. because it was burned on the night he was born. But the proud Ephesians refused this offer with great dignity by saying, "How can a god help to another god?" Although the Temple of Artemis of Ephesus was rebuilt after it was looted and destroyed with the invasion of the Goths in 263 A. D., the temple lost its importance as a result of the spread of Christianity and its remains were used as building material for many buildings for centuries.

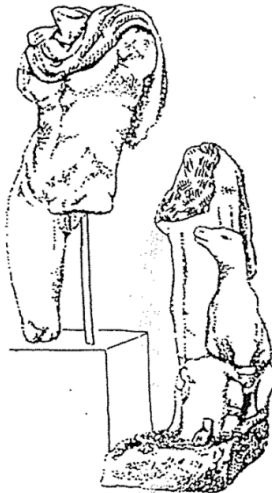
During the excavations made between the years of 1869-1874 by the English engineer J. T. Wood and the excavations made by D. G. Hogarth for the British Museum between the years of 1904-1905 many pieces were sent to England and a few to the Istanbul Archaeological Museum.

Ephesian Artifacts



TREASURY ROOM :

Ephesus coins, precious ring stones, and golden ornaments are exhibited in this room.



BYZANTIAN ARTIFACTS SECTION

Ivory Frieze:

On this frieze encircling a round object there are figures of Roman warriors, humans and horses, and a battle is illustrated. The frieze dated to the 2nd century A.C. is darkened in places because of a fire.

Garden:

In here various stone artifacts of various periods are exhibited, but necropolis (cemetery) finds take the upper hand. Capitals, inscriptions, funeral stells and sarcophagus are exhibited.

TOMB FINDS ROOM

Mycenaean Vase:

The vases in the glass cabinet carry an importance as regards the history of Ephesus. They are vases of the Mycenaean Period, dated to 1400 - 1300 B.C. The vase with two handles and an octopus figure has been unearthed in the excavations in front of the citadel gate of the Basilica of St. John.

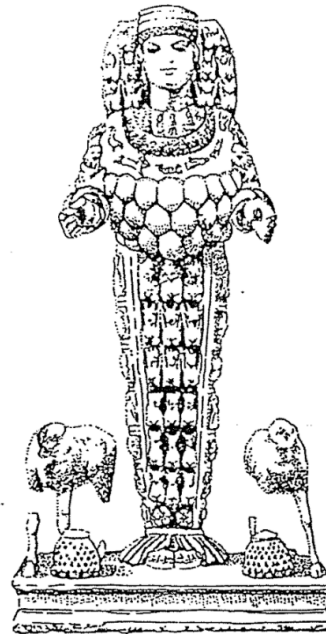
Reliefs with Kybele:

The Mother Goddess of Anatolia, Kybele, is exhibited in a corner of the Tomb Room. Kybele is always shown with her lions, and comprises the source of the Artemis Ephesia. Offerings, reliefs and statuettes of Kybele, the Mother Goddess, are dated to the 5th century B.C.

ARTEMIS ROOM

Colossal Artemis Ephesia Statue:

This statue, as graceful and as magnificent as a column, is dated to the 1st century A.D. The animal figures on the statue symbolize the power of the goddess on wild animals, in addition to which motifs of bees, the symbol of Ephesus, have been used. The egg-shaped breasts represent Artemis, the source of fertility and life, in the most beautiful manner.



Artemis Ephesia :

This artifact unearthed in the excavations at the Efes City Hall in the year 1956 is the most beautiful and valuable Artemis Ephesia, and is dated to 124 - 175 A.D. The only difference between this and the other Artemis is the necklace on her breast adorned with zodiac (star and constellation) symbols. It seems to have been gilded from the waist down in its own period. With the illustration of two deers on the side, it is a copy of the wooden statute in the Artemision, considered to be one of the seven wonders of the world.

EMPEROR CULTS AND PORTRAITS ROOM

Frieze of the Temple of Hadrian:

The frieze is made up of four blocks and has been taken from another construction to be put here. The friezes on the blocks relate Androcles and the legend of the founding of Ephesus. The frieze is dated to 3rd - 4th centuries A.D.



Ozcan Atalay, Ephesus (Turkey: Guney Books)

Our Position in Christ

The current rage in psychological circles focuses on individual self-esteem—how good a person feels about himself or herself. This is not a scriptural emphasis at all. Rather than encouraging us to exalt self, the Bible tells us to deny self (Matt. 16:24), not think too highly of self (Rom. 12:3), and that the heart is desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9)!

We have no reason for good self-esteem. However, we have every reason to walk in confidence due to what *God* thinks of us. While this is taught in many NT books, the book of Ephesians probably emphasizes our position in Christ better than any NT book. Notice how several of the texts below come from Ephesians.

"Understanding your identity in Christ is absolutely essential to your success at living the victorious Christian life!"

Who am I?

I am accepted...

John 1:12 I am God's child.
 John 15:15 I am Christ's friend.
 Rom. 5:1 I have been justified.
 1 Cor. 6:17 I am united with the Lord, and I am one spirit with Him.
 1 Cor. 6:19-20 I have been bought with a price. I belong to God.
 1 Cor. 12:27 I am a member of Christ's body.
 Eph. 1:1 I am a saint.
 Eph. 1:5 I have been adopted as God's child.
 Eph. 2:18 I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit.
 Col. 1:14 I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins.
 Col. 2:10 I am complete in Christ.

I am secure...

Rom. 8:1-2 I am free forever from condemnation.
 Rom. 8:28 I am assured that all things work together for good.
 Rom. 8:31-34 I am free from any condemning charges against me.
 Rom. 8:35-39 I cannot be separated from the love of God.
 2 Cor. 1:21-22 I have been established, anointed, and sealed by God.
 Col. 3:3 I am hidden with Christ in God.
 Phil. 1:6 I am confident that the good work God has begun in me will be perfected.
 Phil. 3:20 I am a citizen of heaven.
 2 Tim. 1:7 I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind.
 Heb. 4:16 I can find grace and mercy in time of need.
 1 John 5:18 I am born of God, and the evil one cannot touch me.

I am significant...

Matt. 5:13-14 I am the salt and light of the earth.
 John 15:1,5 I am a branch of the true vine, a channel of His life.
 John 15:16 I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit.
 Acts 1:8 I am a personal witness of Christ's.
 1 Cor. 3:16 I am God's temple.
 2 Cor. 5:17-21 I am a minister of reconciliation for God.
 2 Cor. 6:1 I am God's co-worker (1 Cor. 3:9).
 Eph. 2:6 I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realm.
 Eph. 2:10 I am God's workmanship.
 Eph. 3:12 I may approach God with freedom and confidence.
 Phil. 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

(From "Living Free in Christ" by Dr. Neil Anderson)

"The more you reaffirm who you are in Christ, the more your behavior will begin to reflect your true identity!" (From "Victory Over the Darkness" by Dr. Neil Anderson)

My Identity

Satan's Lie

God's Truth

You are a sinner because you sometimes sin.

You are a saint (one declared righteous by God) who sometimes sins.

You get your identity from what you have done.

You get your identity from what God has done for you.

You get your identity from what people say about you.

You get your identity from what God says about you.

Your behavior tells you what to believe about yourself.

Your belief about yourself determines your behavior.

(Adapted from "Resolving Spiritual Conflicts and Cross-Cultural Ministry" by Dr. Timothy Warner)



Freedom in Christ

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Dispensations in Ephesians

Has God required the same stipulations of all people throughout history? Certainly not! His command not to eat from certain trees in Eden was given only to our original parents, circumcision does not apply today, the sacrificial system is abolished, and believers worship corporately on Sunday rather than the Sabbath. While salvation has always been by faith (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4), people have shown this faith in different ways in various ages. There have been multiple economies or administrations under which man has lived.

Since Paul's letter to the Ephesians emphasizes the nature of the Church, he often speaks of these economies in this epistle. These verses can help us understand the uniqueness of our own administration (dispensation) in contrast to those preceding it.

Ephesians 3:2-6 is the clearest text that teaches the church age as a dispensation (*οἰκονομία*):

Surely you have heard about the **administration** (*οἰκονομία*) of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. ⁴In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. ⁶This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus (NIV).

The word used here, *oikonomia*, is a compound word from *oikos* ("house") and *nomos* ("law"). The idea of a dispensation is that of managing "house laws" as a steward. God has ultimate authority but he delegates duties to man as his steward to fulfill specific responsibilities. When man faithfully carries out these duties he is rewarded. But failure to discharge his roles brings punishment—even a change of dispensation. This word, *oikonomia* (3:2 "stewardship" NASB; "administration" NIV; "dispensation" KJV), appears repeatedly in the NT in this sense (Luke 16:1-4; 1 Cor 9:17; Eph. 1:10; 3:2, 9; Col. 1:25; 1 Tim. 1:4; Paul Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, 87).

Note above that the Church was not even foreseen in the OT (Eph. 3:5). While Gentiles could be saved in the OT times, they needed to become Jews. The NT idea that they could be God's people without conversion to Judaism was difficult to understand even for the Jerusalem church in the book of Acts. But Paul and other NT apostles and prophets received revelation of this "mystery" unknown except by divine revelation.

The word for "administration" (NIV for *oikonomia*) is also used in Ephesians 3:9 where Paul notes that God had graciously enabled him "to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things." This clearly refers to the church administration.

Ephesians 1:9-10 also notes another dispensation:

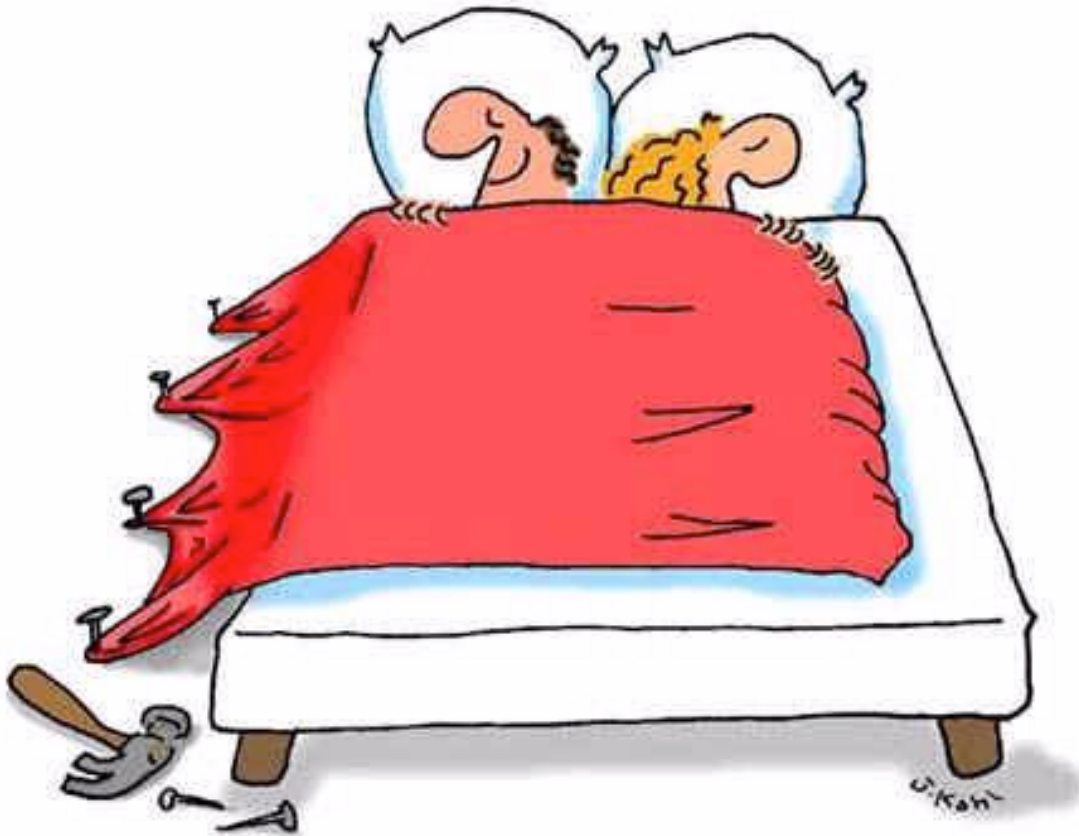
He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him ¹⁰with a view to an **administration** (*οἰκονομία*) suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth..." (NAU).

Here is yet another administration when Christ will rule both heaven and earth in a yet future age (dispensation). Revelation 20:1-6 provides the length of this age as 1000 years, so scholars have called this the millennial rule of Christ. The NIV translation "to be put into effect" literally is "an administration (*oikonomia*, KJV "dispensation") suitable to the fullness of the times" (NAU).

Although not specifically referred to as a dispensation, Ephesians 2:15 notes that a key ministry of Christ was "abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations." Thus, the law economy was done away with at the death of Christ (cf. Rom. 7:7).

Therefore, Ephesians teaches at least three dispensations: law (2:15), grace (3:2, 9), and the future rule of Christ (1:9-10).

Eternal Security in Ephesians



Can a Christian lose his salvation? Paul answers this question in his letter to the Ephesians where he speaks of the sealing with the Holy Spirit:

1. Sphere: “The Holy Spirit is the seal. The believer is sealed with or in the Spirit. In Ephesians 1:13 there is no preposition expressed” (Charles C. Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit*, 80). In other words, technically we are not sealed “by” the Spirit but “with” the Spirit.
2. Extent: All believers are sealed. In fact, the believer’s sealing is the basis for the exhortation not to grieve the Spirit (Eph. 4:30; cf. 2 Cor 1:22).
3. Intent: There exist two purposes of the sealing of Christians:
 - a. *Security*: God has given us His Spirit, so He will also give us our entire inheritance in heaven (Eph. 4:30; 2 Cor 1:22b), including redemption of our bodies (Eph. 1:13-14).
 - b. *Ownership*: It shows that God owns us (2 Cor 1:22b, “seal of ownership”)

The Christian's Armor

Peter Lord, *The 29-59 Plan: A Guide to Communion with God*, 3rd ed. (Agape Ministries, 1982), 35

THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE

PUT ON THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD

then you will be able to stand your ground against the schemes of the devil.

Stand firm, I say:

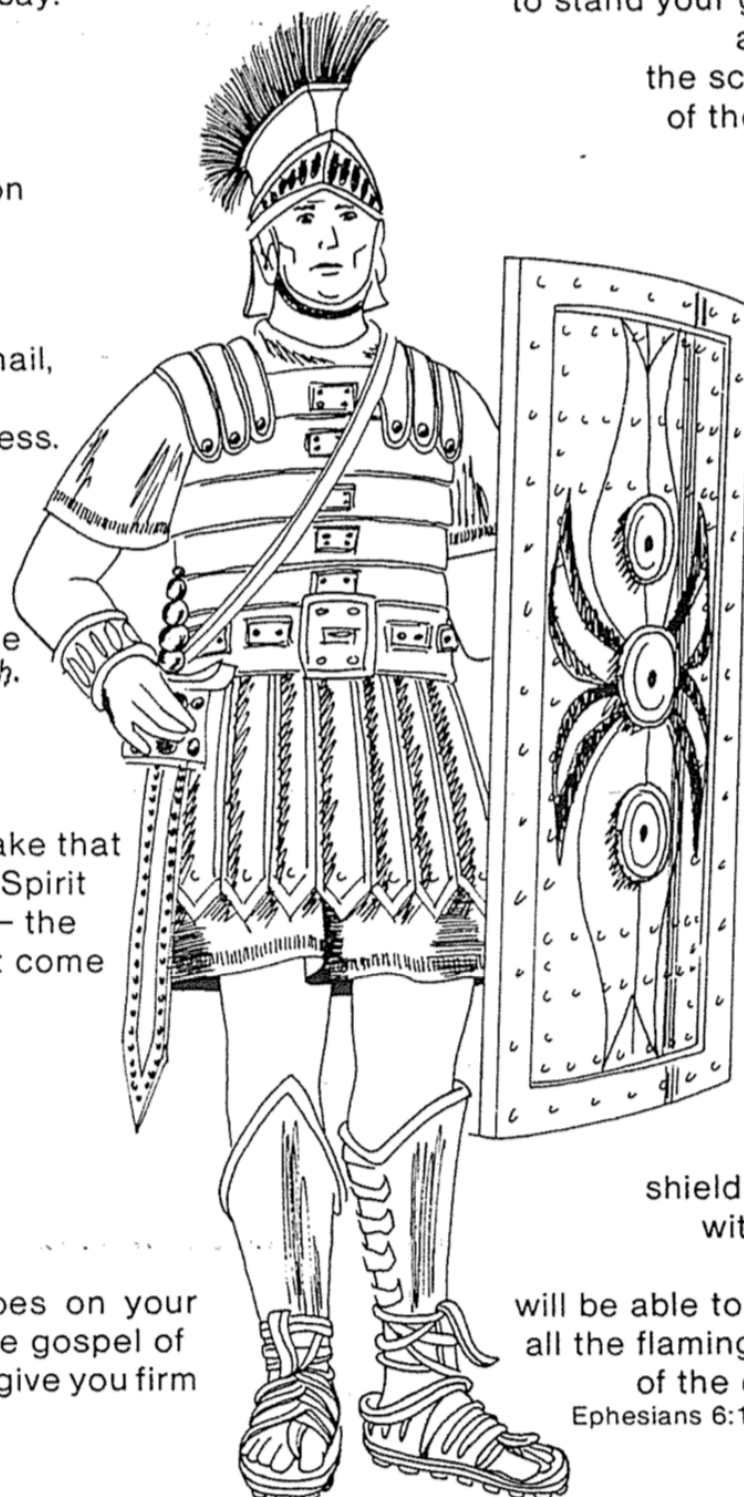
Take salvation for helmet.

For coat of mail, put on righteousness.

Buckle on the belt of truth.

For sword, take that which the Spirit gives you – the words that come from God.

Let the shoes on your feet be the gospel of peace, to give you firm footing.



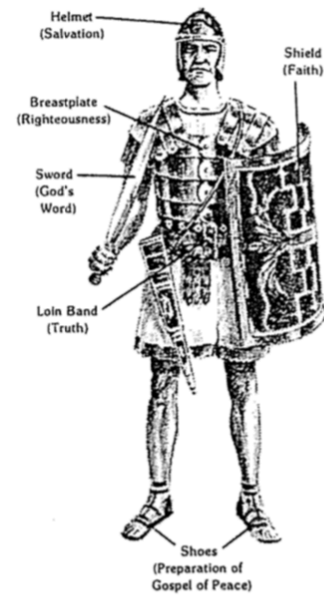
Take up the great shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Ephesians 6:11-18 NEB

The Weapons of Our Warfare

Ephesians 6:10-20 is a key NT passage that shows the nature of our battle with Satan. The first part (6:10-13) notes our dependence upon God for victory which is underscored with the necessity of prayer in the final verses (6:18-20). The central portion of this text (6:14-17) lists six weapons each believer must use against our enemy.

Small Group Directions: Study those weapons assigned to your group by filling in the chart below on these weapons. Be sure you discuss the last column by giving some practical ways that we can help one another deploy this weapon with success!



Weapons	Roman Function	Spiritual Meaning	Defends Against Accusations of...	Practical Applications
Belt (14a)	Held up flowing robe and sword	Integrity	Hypocrisy	
Breastplate (14b)	Protected vital organs	Imputed righteousness	Never being able to conquer sin	
Shoes (15)	Gave mobility to fight anywhere	Availability in evangelism	Uselessness in sharing the gospel	
Shield (16)	Extinguished arrows	Faith in God	Inability to fight temptations	
Helmet (17a)	Protected from head injury	Security of salvation	Doubt of salvation	
Sword (17b)	Attacked the foe or defended against attack	God's Word, the Bible	Inadequacy of God's Word (lies about us or God)	

Thought Questions

- What are the practical ways of "putting on" each item (write in last column above)?
- Which item of spiritual armor is the strongest for you personally?
- Which is the weakest for you?
- What commitment to accountability are you making today to help your weakest area?

What Do You Think of Prayer?

Ephesians speaks of prayer more than any of Paul's epistles. To explore your own ideas on this vital subject, please mark as A, U, or D to show whether you Agree, are Unsure, or Disagree with each of the follow statements on prayer.

1. God does nothing except in response to prayer
2. Prayer is the most important activity for the Christian
3. The only prayer of an unbeliever that God answers is a prayer of repentance
4. The more people praying for you, the better
5. Prayer walks (praying on site) are more effective than praying from far away
6. Christians should try to pray with believers living in sin
7. Prayerlessness is a symptom of self-sufficiency
8. My attitude is a barometer of my prayer life
9. Satan knows the inaudible prayers of our heart (i.e., he can read our minds)
10. Satan counterfeits answers to prayer
11. We should confront principalities and powers in prayer
12. We should pray against demons who control certain geographical areas
13. The type of prayer Satan hates most is praise

Paul's Prayers for NT Churches

Source Unknown (1 of 2)

Study the following prayers of Paul for churches under his care, marking this sheet with lines to common themes, circling similar words or concepts, showing contrasts, etc. Look for *how* he prayed for others as well as *what* he prayed for. How does this differ from your own prayers for people you know?

- 1Ths. 3:12-13 May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.
- 1Ths. 5:23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2Cor. 13:7 Now we pray to God that you will not do anything wrong. Not that people will see that we have stood the test but that you will do what is right even though we may seem to have failed.
- 2Cor. 13:9 We are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong; and our prayer is for your perfection.
- Rom. 10:1 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.
- 2Ths. 1:11 With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith.
- Col. 1:9-12 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.
- Col. 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.
- Eph. 1:16-19 I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength,

- That the eyes of their hearts would be enlightened in order that they would know the hope to which He has called them.
- That they would know the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints.
- That they would know His incomparably great power for those who believe.
- That out of His glorious riches He would strengthen them with power through His Spirit in their inner being.
- That Christ would dwell in their hearts through faith.
- That they, being rooted and established in love, would have power, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.
- That they would have power to know this love that surpasses knowledge --that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.
- That their love would abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that they would be able to discern what is best and would be pure and blameless until the day of Christ.
- That they would be filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ --to the glory and praise of God.
- That they would be active in sharing their faith, so that they would have a full understanding of every good thing they had in Christ.

Paul's Prayers for NT Churches

Source Unknown (2 of 2)

How do we pray for people? We are often too shallow. Perhaps Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1:16-19 can become a good checklist for godly, Word-led prayer for the saints...

- That the eyes of their hearts would be enlightened in order that they would know the hope to which He has called them.
- That they would know the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints.
- That they would know His incomparably great power for those who believe.
- That out of His glorious riches He would strengthen them with power through His Spirit in their inner being.
- That Christ would dwell in their hearts through faith.
- That they, being rooted and established in love, would have power, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.
- That they would have power to know this love that surpasses knowledge --that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.
- That their love would abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that they would be able to discern what is best and would be pure and blameless until the day of Christ.
- That they would be filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ --to the glory and praise of God.
- That they would be active in sharing their faith, so that they would have a full understanding of every good thing they had in Christ.