

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS "We Are His Workmanship"

Date: 4-7-24 Lesson: 1

Pastor David Nehrenz – Trinity Lutheran Church – Norman, OK

THE TEXT

(Ephesians 1:1-14) Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus:

(2) Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

(3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, (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 through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, (6) to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

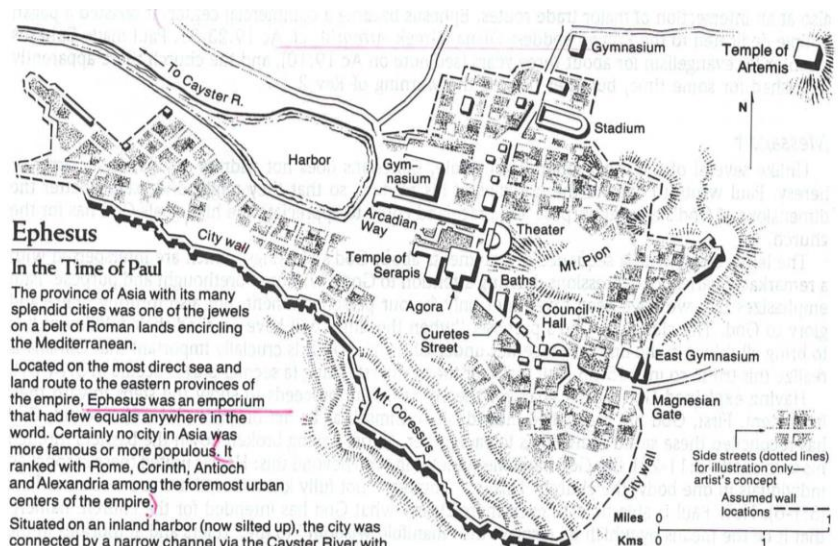
(7) In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, (8) which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight (9) making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ (10) as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

(11) In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, (12) so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

(13) In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, (14) who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.



THE STUDY NOTES



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.

God's Grace in Ephesians †

Lutheran theologians express the gospel by three phrases: by grace, through faith, on account of Christ. But some may view faith as a work of the believer. Paul in Ephesians, to correct this view, stated clearly: "For it is by grace you have been saved through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (2:8-9). Faith is God's gift through the work of the Holy Spirit in the means of grace: the word and the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

In order that the teaching of God's grace may be appreciated in its full significance, Paul treats a truth which is very important, but difficult to comprehend—God's election of believers from eternity (1:3-23). Human reason deduces that either man must be the source of both salvation and damnation (work righteousness) or that God is the source of both (double predestination). Either view is logical, but neither is derived from the Scriptures, which teach that God is the only source of salvation (2:8-9) and man is the only source of damnation (Mt 23:37).

The Scriptural doctrine of election is a most comforting teaching (belonging to gospel, not to law). For our faith does not depend on our weak will, but on God's will and is sustained by his Holy Spirit through word and sacrament.

Setting

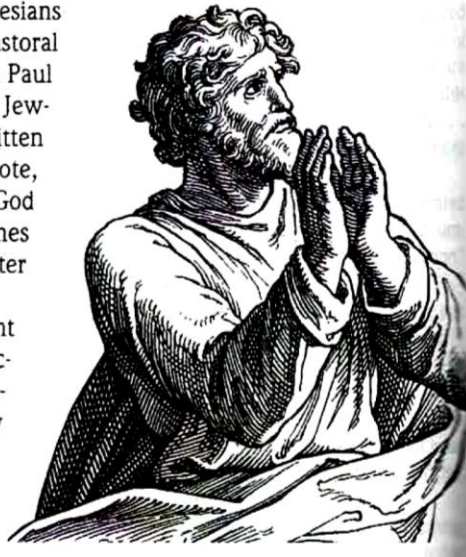
Ephesus was well situated as a trade center, with its harbor, access to the Cayster River, and location close to the Maeander Valley. It was a free city, famous for its temple to the Greek goddess Artemis and also for its thriving Jewish population, which enjoyed considerable privilege (see *Ant* 14:223–30). See map, p 1886.

Central Issue

According to Ac 18–20, Paul spent nearly three years with the Ephesian congregation, more time than with any other mission congregation he served. He first visited a group of disciples at Ephesus during his third missionary journey (AD 52–55).

The depth of his relationship with the Ephesians shows through in the theological depth of this Pastoral Letter and its liturgical character. The key problem Paul addresses is division between the congregation's Jewish and Gentile members. His opening prayer, written in the traditional Jewish *Berakah* pattern (see note, 1:3–14), addresses the issue of unity and thanks God for His answer in Christ. Paul returns to the themes of unity, Baptism, and prayer repeatedly in the Letter (see Luther and the outline below).

After Paul wrote Ephesians in c AD 60, he sent Timothy to Ephesus as a leader because false doctrine afflicted the congregation (1Tm 1:3). It eventually became a leading church in Asia Minor (Rv 2:1–7). According to the early Christian historian Eusebius, the apostle John settled in Ephesus for his final years of ministry (*NPNF* 2 1:132).



(v. 1) (Acts 9:13; 18:19–24; 19:1–35; 20:16,17; 1 Cor 15:32; 16:8; 1 Tim 1:3; 2 Tim 1:18; 4:12; Rev 1:11; 2:1)

(v. 2) (Rom 1:17)

(v. 3) (Jn 20:17; 2 Cor 1:3; 1 Pet 1:3)

(v. 4) (Mt 25:34; Jn 17:24; Rom 8:29–33; 9:6–26; 11:5,7,28; 16:13; Col 3:12)

(v. 5) (Lk 12:32; Rom 8:13–15; Col 1:19)

(v. 6) (Mt 3:17; 17:5; Mk 1:11; 9:7; 12:6; Lk 3:22; 20:13; Col 1:13; 2 Pet 1:17)

THE LIFE APPLICATION

"He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him."

What effect does this truth have on you?