

Outline of Epistle to Ephesians

Ian Gibson (February 2018)

Ch1v1-3v21: Our Wealth in Christ – Doctrinal Teaching – Privilege

Ch4v1-6v9: Our Walk in the Lord – Practical Exhortations – Responsibility

Ch6v10-24: Our Warfare in the World – Spiritual Conflict – Reality

Ch1

v1-14: Opening greetings; the blessings of God's salvation

v15-23: Paul's prayer for spiritual enlightenment

Ch2

v1-10: The exceeding riches of God's grace

v11-22: The reconciliation of Jew and Gentile

Ch3

v1-13: The revelation of the mystery of Christ

v14-21: Paul's prayer for spiritual empowerment

Ch4

v1-6: The unity of the Spirit

v7-16: The gifts of the ascended Christ

v17-32: The character of the new man

Ch5

v1-21: The divine standard for the Christian's walk

v22-33: The divine standard for the Christian's marriage

Ch6

v1-9: Instruction for children, fathers, servants and masters

v10-24: The Christian's armour; closing salutations

The Prison Epistles of Paul

Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon, written by Paul during his 2 year period of house arrest in Rome around AD64 (Acts 28v30). References to his imprisonment in Ephesians (ch3v1, ch4v1, ch6v20).

Ephesians versus Colossians

Both epistles deal with the great truth of the mystery of Christ & the Church, i.e. Christ the risen Head of the Church in heaven, indissolubly united to the Church which is His body.

Eph 5v32 ***“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church”***.

The emphasis in Ephesians is upon ***“the Church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all”*** (Eph 1v22-23); we learn what the Church is to Christ, the Church is His complement, His fullness.

The emphasis in Colossians is upon Christ as the risen Head of His Church, and ***“in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in Him”*** (Col 2v9-10); we learn what Christ is to the Church, He is our fullness, the Church is incomplete without the direction and supply of Christ the risen Head.

Ephesians directs us particularly to our blessings as believers in Christ; the Spirit of God is mentioned 12x.

Colossians directs us more to the glories of Christ Himself; the Spirit of God mentioned only 1x.

Pictures of the Church in Ephesians

- The Church as the body of Christ. The Lord Jesus is ***“Head over all things to the Church, Which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all”*** (Eph 1v22-23); the Church is what fills the Person of Christ. As individual members of the body, each believer contributes to the overall representation of the Head.
- The Church as a building; ***“built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit”*** (Eph 2v20-22); the Church is filled by the presence of Christ & His glory. Believers are individual living stones built into the building, contributing to its beauty & splendour.
- The Church as the bride of Christ; ***“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it”*** (Eph 5v25); the Church is what fills the heart of Christ. As individual believers, our hearts are full of love for Christ, our heavenly Bridegroom.

Doctrine and Practice in Ephesians

The teaching of divine truth lays an essential basis for the practical exhortations.

The doctrine is knowledge imparted, which must become knowledge expressed in a practical way.

Ch1-3: Our Wealth in Christ – Doctrinal Teaching – Privilege

Note the recurring word “riches” (ch1v7, ch1v18, ch2v7, ch3v8, ch3v16).

We have the wealth of the riches of divine grace & glory, ***“exceeding riches”***, ***“unsearchable riches”***, in the blessings of redemption, our rich inheritance in Christ, God’s salvation being extended equally to Jew & Gentile in our Lord Jesus Christ, and being brought to the very same ground of blessing in the Church.

Ch1v1-14: Opening greetings; the blessings of God's salvation

The apostle catalogues our spiritual blessings as believers in Christ, graciously bestowed by ***“the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”*** (v3). We are chosen by God in Christ (v4), predestinated to a position of sonship (v5), accepted in Christ (v6), redeemed & forgiven (v7), enlightened (v8-9), predestinated to share an inheritance with Christ (v10-11), and eternally sealed with the holy Spirit of God (v13).

We need to view these truths from the divine perspective; in Ephesians we see God working from Himself, and primarily for Himself, ***“according to the riches of His grace”*** (v7), for the praise of His own glory (vs6,12,14), ***“according to the good pleasure / mystery of His will”*** (vs5,9), and His own eternal purpose (vs9,11).

This divine purpose of God is all centered in His own well beloved Son; ch3v11 ***“According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord”***.

Ch1v15-23: Paul's Prayer for Spiritual Enlightenment

This 1st prayer of the epistle, addressed to ***“the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory”*** (v17), is for spiritual enlightenment, ***“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know ...”*** (v18):

1. ***“what is the hope of His calling”*** (v18) – see ch1v3-6.
2. ***“and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints”*** (v18) – see ch1v10-14.
3. ***“And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe”*** (v19) – see ch1v19-2v6.

Ch2v1-10: The Exceeding Riches of God's Grace

What we were ***“in times past”*** before salvation, by nature & by practice (v1-3).

“But God ...” (v4); divine gracious intervention, we are the objects of His rich mercy, great love, unmerited grace, and abounding kindness toward us, which we will appreciate all the more ***“in the ages to come”*** (v7).

Note the word ***“together”*** (5x, vs5,6,21,22), i.e. a unity of Jews and Gentiles, equally blessed with salvation.

Ch2v11-22: The Reconciliation of Jew and Gentile

There is now in the Church, and in Christ Jesus, a dispensational peace between Jew & Gentile, with ***“both”*** (3x, vs14,16,18) brought together to the same exalted ground of ***“one new man, so making peace”*** (v15).

The Church is now the place spiritually of God's hallowed presence; ***“an holy temple in the Lord”*** (v21), ***“an habitation of God”*** (v22).

Ch3v1-13: The Revelation of The Mystery of Christ

Focusing on Paul's ministry to the Gentiles, this truth of the mystery of Christ and the Church had never been made known before, but was now revealed to the apostle Paul.

His desire is that we all ***“may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ”*** (v4).

Ch3v14-21: Paul's Prayer for Spiritual Empowerment

This 2nd prayer of the epistle, addressed to ***“the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”*** (v14), is for spiritual empowerment, for us to be in the good of all the doctrinal teaching, ***“to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man”*** (v16), ***“according to the power that worketh in us”*** (v20).

Ch4v1-6v9: Our Walk in the Lord – Practical Exhortations – Responsibility

There is an appeal for practice based upon the preceding doctrinal foundation; ch4v1 *“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation (calling) wherewith ye are called”*.

We are under the Lordship of Christ, recognizing His authority, and it is our responsibility to submit every aspect of our lives to Him (see multiple references to *“the Lord”*, ch4vs1,17, ch5vs8,10,17,19,22, ch6vs1,4,10).

Seven-Fold Aspect of the Believer’s Walk in Ephesians

1. Ch2v2 – A pre-conversion walk

Before conversion, our walk was governed by the world, the devil and the sinful flesh (ch2v2-3).

2. Ch2v10 – A pre-ordained walk

We are now as believers to be marked by a walk that reflects the gracious & masterly work of God in our lives, and that *“we are His workmanship”*, God’s great masterpiece of new creation, *“created in Christ Jesus”*.

God has set before us a pre-ordained pathway to walk in, characterized by *“good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”*.

3. Ch4v1 – A worthy walk

A character of walk that is worthy & befitting of our calling of a holy God to Himself, as saints & sons of God.

4. Ch4v17 – A distinctive separated walk

“that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind”.

This will be a walk not governed by the sinful flesh (ch4), nor by the world (ch5), nor by the devil (i.e. ch6).

A walk giving expression to having *“put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness”* (ch4v24).

5. Ch5v2 – A loving, selfless and sacrificial walk

“And walk in love, (even) as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour”; a sacrificial walk in all the character of Christ as the burnt offering.

6. Ch5v8 – An enlightened walk

“walk as children of light”, a walk consistent with those who have been enlightened by salvation (ch1v18).

7. Ch5v15 – A prudent circumspect walk

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise”, consistent with those to whom God *“hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence”* (ch1v8).

Divine Standards for Believer’s Lives

Ch5v1: *“Be ye therefore followers (imitators) of God, as dear (beloved) children”*.

Ch4v32: *“forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake (in Christ) hath forgiven you”*.

Ch5v2 *“And walk in love, (even) as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us ...”*.

Ch5v25 *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it”*.

Ch6v10-24: Our Warfare in the World – Spiritual Conflict – Reality

Our blessings (ch1v3) and our spiritual battles (ch6v12) are both linked with the *“heavenly places”*.

Our spiritual armour commences with *“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth”* (v14).