

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS

SESSION 2

Letter to the Ephesians: Ephesians 1 - LEADERS GUIDE

WELCOME

Ok guys! We've made it to **Week 2** – and today we will be in **Ephesians 1**. I need you to remember that there will be some words and phrases that have traditionally been “scary” for the church. Today, the word “predestination” will be in our reading. We don't run away from words or phrases like this. We study them so that we can fully understand how Paul intended them when he wrote this letter to the church. Our hope is to simplify the “scary” parts so that we understand Paul's letter more fully. Everybody good with that plan? Let's open in prayer.

QUESTION

*After reading **Ephesians 1** this week, why is it good to be reminded - at least sometimes - of who you were before you came to faith in Jesus Christ?*

BACKSTORY

Today, we're going to read all of **Ephesians 1** – I hope you read ahead. In the first 14 verses, Paul reveals that the church is a spiritual body which was formed by Jesus. And, since Jesus formed up the church, then it is blessed with a spiritual identity that should lead to a new behavior/ conduct. Paul is encouraging the church in Ephesus to practice this new spiritual identity.

The big picture in these verses is to show that the church has been a part of God's plan “since the foundation of the world” – that's pre-**Genesis 1:1**. The church is a demonstration of God's grace – through the finished work of Jesus Christ – and intended to bring God the glory and to accomplish His will on earth and in heaven.

QUESTION

*As you read through **Ephesians 1** this week [especially the first 14 verses] were their words or phrases that you had problems with or that you didn't understand?*

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read **Ephesians 1:1-2**

QUESTION

*In the **first two verses** what way might Paul's greeting – both the title he writes with and the words of blessing that he uses – have been an encouragement to the church at Ephesus?*

- Say you were a part of the church at Ephesus, how would these words have encouraged you?

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read **Ephesians 1:3a**

THE CHURCH @ EPHESUS

Who is the “us” here? Who is Paul writing to? [*the church at Ephesus*]

- What makes up the church? [*regenerate believers who have come to faith in Jesus Christ*]
- So, there is a corporate element [*the church*] and an individual element [*regenerate persons make up the church.*]

And remember in our intro – “the church is a demonstration of God’s grace – through the finished work of Jesus Christ – and intended to bring God the glory and to accomplish His will on earth and in heaven.”

So, God has blessed the church – how?

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read **Ephesians 1:3b-4**

QUESTION

What is God’s goal and purpose for His church, according to verse 4?

- *Knowing yourself, why is it incredibly good news that He wants to make us “holy and blameless” before Him?*
- *What does this reveal to you about God’s grace & mercy?*
- *How did God the Father ultimately accomplish this?*

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read **Ephesians 1:5-6**

QUESTION

Let’s just talk about this now. In verse 5, why is the word “predestined” a difficult word for Christians to understand and accept?

- *Knowing this letter was written to the church, why did Paul use this word to talk about the church’s relationship to God?*
- *How does the picture of adoption help you to understand God’s grace and acceptance toward His church through Jesus Christ?*

PREDESTINED IN EPHESIANS

Paul uses the word “**predestined**” in connection with adoption – and the connection he is making here in this letter is that in His love, God adopted us – the church made up of the regenerate members – to Himself according to the purpose of His will. The definition of this word is to predetermine or foreordain.

But, the definition of the word is only part of the equation. What we also need to see is **how** Paul intentionally **used** this word.

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read **Ephesians 1:7-14**

Paul shares with the church that the church is blessed through Jesus Christ in **three** ways:

- The church has been redeemed through His **blood**.
 - Another way of saying this, the members of the church have been made regenerate through the finished work of Jesus Christ.
- The church has received an **inheritance**.
 - Don’t know if you picked up on it, but in **verses 12-13** – there’s a pronoun shift. This is in reference to Jew and Gentile. But now they are all combined into **ONE CHURCH**. This is ultimately the church that has received an inheritance.

- And, the church has been sealed with the promised **Holy Spirit**.
 - A seal is a mark of ownership and authenticity. It is used by ranchers to mark their cattle – as a sign that these cattle belong to a certain ranch. These seals are external. What Paul is referring to is an internal seal. God puts His Holy Spirit as a seal on our hearts as a sign that He has eternally adopted us through His Son Jesus Christ.

QUESTION

In verses 11-14, explain the Holy Spirit's role in salvation.

- *What assurance of salvation does the working of the Holy Spirit provide?*

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read **Ephesians 1:15-23**

Through Paul's prayer for the church, we can see three things:

1. Paul's **thanksgiving** for the church at Ephesus. **[verse 15-16]**
2. Paul's **intercession** for the church at Ephesus. **[verses 17-19]**
3. And, Paul's **recognition** of Jesus' Lordship over His church – "which is His body, and the fullness of Him who fills all in all." **[verses 20-23]**

QUESTION

How does Paul's indication that Jesus is "head over all things to the church," and the church's identity as "His body," indicate how the church is to be led and the role of the church?

CONCLUSION

Outline for how we will study Ephesians:

- **March 3rd: Ephesians 2:1-10 - Salvation is by God's grace through faith alone – not our own works but is the gift of God.**
- **March 10th: Ephesians 2:11-22 - As a result, God has destroyed the barrier between Jew and Gentile, unifying them and being indwelt with his Holy Spirit.**
- **March 17th: Hangout Night**
- **April 7th: Ephesians 3 – The gospel call to share the gospel and prayer for spiritual strength.**
- **April 14th: Ephesians 4 – Live in supernatural unity to the glory of God.**
- **April 21st: Ephesians 5–6:9 – In regeneration, walk in love toward one another.**
- **April 28th: Ephesians 6:10-24 – Strength through the whole armor of God.**
- **May 5th: Hangout Night or Content Make-Up**