**Ephesians**

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| **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:** *“1I therefore, the prisoner of the LORD, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, 2With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”* – **Ephesians 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**

**I. Title**

The title (*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).

**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.

**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.

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” (avga,ph avgapa,w) 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.

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).

**V. Distinctive Points and Other Remarks**

DISTINCTIVE POINTS

“Paul’s greatest prison masterpiece”

“The ‘Grand Canyon of Scripture’; it is broader, deeper, and more beautiful than any other book.”

There are no controversies dealt with. Ephesians centers on the person and work of Christ and what our person and work should be because of Him.

OTHER REMARKS

The entire book seems to be one huge flowing thought due to the many one sentence paragraphs.

1:1-23

2:1-3

2:14-17

3:1-7

3:14-19

Six Great Passages from Ephesians

1. Prayers of Paul

1:15-23—Prayer for enlightenment

3:14-21—For Empowerment

2. Salvation (2:1-10)

3. One Way—Seven things just one way (4:1-6)

4. Husbands and Wives (5:18-33)

5. Parents and Children (6:1-4)

Honor is an attitude

Obedience is action

Nurture is discipline and chastisement

Admonition is teaching

6. Armor of God (6:10-17)

**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).