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**A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF
EPHESIANS**
**THE ROAD TO REDEMPTION AND
RECONCILIATION**

DR. KARRY D. WESLEY



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DEDICATION



I WOULD LIKE to dedicate this book to my wife, Cheryl, and my three sons: Christopher (Skylan), Karl (Jasmine), and Charles. They have always been a source of inspiration for me. Then there are my first grandchildren, Kamden James and Karter Monea Wesley. I probably could have finished writing this book several months ago but when they were around, Papa had to turn off the computer to hang out with them (I enjoyed it every time).

I would also like to dedicate this book to the staff of the Antioch Fellowship Church in Dallas. Their commitment to ministry has always allowed me to focus on teaching and preaching. As a result of their hard work, I can spend time writing books like this one to bless the church.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this book to a couple of members of the Antioch Fellowship Church by the names of James and Bessie Bailey. Brother Bailey served as the chairman of the Deacon Ministry for over twenty years. Both of them authenticate what it means to be servants of the Lord. They love God and demonstrate it by loving God's people.

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INTRODUCTION



THIS LETTER TO the Christians in Ephesus was written by Paul while imprisoned in Rome. Most scholars believe it was written between AD 60-63. Since it was written from prison, it is often called one of “the prison epistles,” along with the letters written to the Philippians, Colossians, and to Philemon. In this book, you will notice me using several references to scriptures from the book of Colossians. This is intentional because the letters written to the Christians in Ephesus and Colossae are almost identical in content.

Redemption and reconciliation are the primary themes of the book of Ephesians. Paul places emphasis on Jesus “bridging” the gap between man and God. He shows how the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ open the door for all to be saved, including the Gentiles. Jesus Christ removed the wall between the Gentiles and Jews.

As we shall see in this study, Paul spends a lot of time addressing the doctrinal position of believers before focusing on the practical duties. In Ephesians 1-3, you will notice that he shares

a lot of the same doctrinal information over and over again. This is intentional. If Christians don't have the right doctrinal beliefs, the practical behavior will be out of order. On the other hand, when the doctrine is right, the practice will be righteous.

As you read through this material that I have compiled, it is my prayer that you will be informed and inspired. The material in this book is not designed to be a deep theological discourse on Paul's letter to the Ephesians. In most of my writings, I try to use the homiletical approach to give the reader a basic understanding of the material. I believe this approach will at least create a hunger and thirst for the reader to continue studying and learning more from God's Word.

THE SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS FOR GOD'S FAMILY

EPHESIANS 1:1-7



The Genesis of the Church

The Prisoner Communicating
The Previous Contact
The Planted Church
The Participants' Comprehension
The Partial Conversion
The Presented Christ
The Power Confirmed
The Process Completed
The Preaching Continued

The Greetings to the Church

The Assembly Gathered
The Ascribed Generalization
The Anchored Group

The Attainable Goal
The Amazing Grace
The Additional Gift
The Almighty God

The Gifts for the Church

The Blessed Recipients
The Birth Registry
The Blameless Results
The Blemishes Removed
The Blended Relationship
The Blood Ransom
The Bound Released
The Bridge Reopened

SALVATION IS THE greatest blessing we have received. If you are financially bankrupt but saved, you are blessed. If you are physically sick but saved, you are blessed. In the opening

chapter, Paul deals with the spiritual blessings that we have received in Jesus Christ.

THE GENESIS OF THE CHURCH

It is important to know that Paul is **the prisoner communicating** to the Christians in Ephesus. In the book of Ephesians, Paul is communicating to the church by letter because he is imprisoned in Rome at the time this letter is written. It is one of the four “prison epistles” written by Paul when he was under house arrest at Rome. Before dealing with Ephesians, I needed to look at another passage to show Paul’s connection to the believers in Ephesus. As a matter of fact, turn to Acts 19 for a few minutes.

Although Paul is writing the letter to the Ephesians from prison, **the previous contact** should be mentioned before we continue. This is not a letter designed to introduce himself to the Christians in Ephesus. Paul had spent time in Ephesus before being imprisoned in Rome. According to Acts 19:1, he arrived in Ephesus and found certain disciples. According to Acts 19:7, there were twelve disciples in Ephesus at the time. These twelve disciples started believing in Jesus as a result of the preaching of Apollos.

It is believed by many theologians that **the planted church** was an act of Paul rather than Apollos. How could Paul be credited for planting this church if when he arrived there were disciples there? Apollos had been there before Paul arrived but the Ephesus church had not been officially established. As we shall see in just a moment, the preaching of Apollos had led to repentance and not reconciliation. Apollos had started the process but God sent Paul to complete it.

It is true that they were called disciples but the truth is that **the participants’ comprehension** did not line up with a true understanding of the gospel message. As disciples, they had some knowledge of Jesus but they didn’t really know Him by way of the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 19:2, Paul asked the twelve disciples, “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since you believed?” The Greek translation is like this: “Did you receive the Holy Ghost when you believed?” For many, this sounds strange. How could they be called disciples without knowing about the Holy Ghost? Some would even take this passage to mean that you become saved first and then you receive the Holy Ghost later. Apollos had ministered to this group but had not shared the whole counsel of God. He was a powerful orator but he needed to grow and become more knowledgeable of the whole truth (see Acts 18:24-26).

Paul had to address **the partial conversion** of the disciples. The word *conversion* basically means “to be changed.” Conversion involves the three Rs (*recognizing* your sins, *repenting* from sin, and *receiving* the Savior). They had only made it to Step 2. When they expressed to Paul that they didn’t have a clue as to what he was talking about, Paul knew he had to dig a little deeper into their conversion experience. He wanted to know unto what they were baptized (see Acts 19:2-3). They responded by saying, “John’s baptism.” Paul had to explain John’s baptism to them. He said, “John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance saying unto the people that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus” (Acts 19:4). Paul did not degrade their incomplete faith. Neither did he rebuke them. He took time to explain it to them.

As a result of their response, we have **the presented Christ**. Basically, Paul explained that John the Baptist served as the forerunner of Jesus Christ to prepare the way for Him. After repentance, it was absolutely necessary for them to receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. After he presented Christ to them, they were baptized in the name of Jesus (see Acts 19:5). The work performed by Apollos made Paul’s assignment a whole lot easier. In a real sense, the twelve disciples were ripe for picking because the ministry of Apollos prepared them for the next phase.

In Acts 19:6, we have **the power confirmed** after Paul lays his hands on them. Paul laid hands on them and the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied (see Acts 19:6). The passage does not say that Paul laid hands on them so they could receive the Holy Spirit. The text tells us that he laid hands and God's Spirit came on them. The image is powerful here. The new converts witnessed proof of their salvation immediately. God allowed them to receive confirmation of their salvation by allowing an outward manifestation of the inward metamorphosis that occurred in their lives.

As a result of Apollos and Paul, we see **the process completed** for the twelve disciples. The process of genuine conversion took place in their lives. The disciples were saved, sanctified, and filled with the Holy Spirit. Now the church has been planted in Ephesus and the work of ministry is activated. God used Apollos and Paul to touch the lives of the people in Ephesus. Please know that the point of this section is not to paint a picture of one person being better than the other. I agree that God used Paul to plant the church, but the work of Apollos was just as valuable. In 1 Corinthians 3:6-7, Paul said, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." Therefore, it is not about Apollos or Paul but God's miraculous work.

In Acts 19:8, we are told that **the preaching continued** in Ephesus after this powerful conversion experience. Paul continued preaching for three months in the temple until the Jews stirred up trouble. He moved the disciples to the School of Tyrannus and continued preaching and teaching for another two years before departing. Paul was constantly under attack during this five-month span but he continued to preach and teach the Word of God. Just before his departure, we are told "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed" (Acts 19:20). In other words,

the people starting growing spiritually before Paul was led by the Spirit to leave.

THE GREETINGS TO THE CHURCH

Now let's go back to the book of Ephesians and picture **the assembly gathered** after receiving this letter from Paul. During the early days of Christianity, the believers didn't have a bound Bible with this letter in it. They couldn't turn to the book of Ephesians and read the first chapter. They didn't have a Bible app on their iPad to click on. They would assemble together and have the letters from Paul, Peter, John, James, and others read aloud.

Let's deal with **the ascribed generalization** of the assembly. The letter is written to "the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 1:1). All of the believers were connected. It was the cross of Calvary that linked them together. Notice that the letter was written to the "saints" which were at Ephesus. Yes, they are called saints. Which of the believers in the assembly are saints? All of them fit this category. The term *saint* is believed by many to represent the ultimate state or highest level of spirituality. In actuality, it is really a generalization representing all believers.

The term does not refer to a few people with great spiritual qualities. The word *saint* means set apart, consecrated, and holy. The saint is a follower of Jesus who has been set apart to live for God. Yes, the saint has been set apart to live for God but this does not mean he is doing it. In Colossians 3:10, Paul said, "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." The new man has been put on but this does not necessarily mean he is acting new. The same is true for what he says in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

I believe the second description in Ephesians 1:1 represents **the anchored group** in Christ. Paul describes them as “the faithful in Christ Jesus.” It is great to be a saint but better to be a saint who is faithful in Christ Jesus. The faithful one is not just someone who has placed his faith in Jesus but he has also chosen to totally commit his life to Christ. In Matthew 12:50, Jesus said, “For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.” In 1 John 2:17, John says, “And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.” The psalmist said, “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psalm 40:8). The term *faithful* is used as both a noun and an adjective. As a noun, the faithful are those who have placed their faith in Jesus. As an adjective, you are dealing with the faithful saints who are committed to doing things according to the Lord’s command.

We should view faithfulness as **the attainable goal** for all believers. When there are faithful in the midst, it shows us that the status is reachable. In other words, if you can be anchored in Christ, so can I. Faithfulness is an attainable goal that simply requires a sincere commitment from the believer. It is great when a person accepts Jesus Christ as his Savior. The believer does absolutely nothing on his own to be saved. Jesus Christ did it all. However, Jesus desires to become Savior and Lord. He is Lord when we sincerely submit to His orders and abide by His words.

In all of the Pauline epistles, Paul always places emphasis on **the amazing grace** we have received as believers. Here he says, “Grace be to you” (Ephesians 1:2a). Paul is not providing grace but reminding them of the grace they had received by being saints. Grace means all the favors from God. It is dealing with the unmerited favor we receive as a result of being a believer. It deals with salvation and all other favors. Later on in Ephesians Paul said, “That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ

Jesus” (Ephesians 2:7). In 2 Corinthians 8:9, Paul said, “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”

As if grace were not enough, he comments on **the additional gift** we have received from God. Not only have we received grace, we also have peace (shalom). This is an interesting term that deals with a settled or calm spirit no matter what circumstances exist. In John 14:27, Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

This grace and peace come from **the Almighty God** (see Ephesians 1:2). God is responsible for this grace and peace. He is the only source or provider of grace and peace in the spiritual sense. You can't receive it from any other means. It comes from God the Father through Jesus Christ the Son. It is all-sufficient grace. God gives peace that passes understanding.

THE GIFTS FOR THE CHURCH

As believers, we are **the blessed recipients** from our heavenly Father. Paul said, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3). In this passage, God's blessings are spiritual and heavenly, not material blessings. These are not temporal blessings that will one day fade away. These are blessings of the inner man. These spiritual blessings are only found in Jesus Christ.

In **the birth registry** in heaven, the name of every believer is recorded. This registry includes all believers—past, present, and future. This is where the process becomes confusing to people. He has *chosen us* in him before the foundation of the world. In Ephesians 1:5, he says, “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself.” Let me deal

with four terms that will help us with this series on Ephesians. The terms are *adoption*, *predestination*, *foreordained*, and *elect*. God has a birth registry with every person born from Adam to the end of time. Millions and millions of names are recorded in this registry. God has adopted us as children.

It was predestinated, that is, foreordained. The term means “destined before” or “predetermined.” Predestination and foreordained simply mean that events and situations in the plan of God are made certain in advance. Let’s look briefly at Romans 8:28-29. Paul said, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” The word does not mean that God chooses some persons for salvation and everyone else for eternal punishment. In eternity past, God chose (elected, predestinated, adopted) some individuals to receive salvation and to be conformed to the image of His Son. He does not force anyone to believe but he knows who will believe.

God is not in heaven wondering whose names will be included in the Lamb’s Book of Life. He already knows. It was the pleasure of God and His purpose to adopt us. In John 15:16 Jesus says, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.” In Ephesians 1:5, he says, “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself.” Let’s spend a few minutes dealing with this action of God.

Look at **the blameless results** that come after being selected by Him. Now let’s go back to the end of Ephesians 1:4. He has chosen us “. . . that we should be *holy and without blame* before him in love” (emphasis added).” After being chosen, we become holy and blameless before Him in love. The word *holy* (*hagious*)

means set apart and consecrated just like the word *saint* discussed before. The word *blameless* (*amomous*) means to be free from sin, dirt, and filth. In Philippians 2:15, Paul says, “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.”

As a result of our selection by God, we have **the blemishes removed** from our lives. This means that the blemishes have been removed because of the divine covering. This means when He comes back for the church, which will be without spot or wrinkle, He will find it even though all of us will still have some sin issues. In 2 Peter 3:14, Peter says, “Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.” The believer’s perfection is in Christ and Christ alone.

The believer’s perfection is due to **the blended relationship** between the saint and the Savior. As a result of being “in Christ” now, the Father does not see us as we are from a spiritual sense. Since we are in Christ, He sees what we have become. God accepts us based on this blended condition. It is like taking our sinful nature and placing it in the blender and pouring in Jesus. As a result, you have a new creation. Paul says, “To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved” (Ephesians 1:6).

It took **the blood ransom** to cause all of this to happen. In Ephesians 1:7, Paul says, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” The word *redemption* (*apolutrosin*) carries the idea of deliverance or setting a man free by paying a ransom. In 1 Timothy 2:5-6, Paul said, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”

Let me comment on **the bound released** as a result of the blood ransom. We were once in Satan’s custody as we shall see in a

moment. Jesus came and paid the ultimate price for our release. If that's not enough to excite you, although we are all guilty of sinning, the freedom comes with forgiveness of sins! The slate has been wiped clean and the record has been expunged! I am free and there are no more chains holding me. My soul is resting. It's just a blessing. Praise the Lord, hallelujah, I'm free. Yes, we were sentenced to death but the Judge came down from the bench and said, "I will die for him."

By the way, **the bridge reopened** between God and man when Jesus died for the sins of the world. Before Jesus died, there was not a way for humanity to return to God. We could not re-enter His presence because sin had erected a wall between us and God. The sin of the first Adam caused the bridge to close but the second Adam caused it to reopen.