

# Love Letters

## Lesson 6: Ephesians 1–2

### Introduction

Have you ever wondered about the meaning of life and why you were put on this earth? Ever given thought to where you fit in to the big picture? The letter to the Ephesians presents the answers to such questions and offers a unique worldview to the Christian. It conveys the message of the divine purpose being accomplished by the almighty acts of God in Christ—our source for the meaning of our existence. We see Paul beautifully unfold aspects of the Christian life such as: *chosen, adopted, redeemed, forgiven, enriched, sealed, and enlightened*.

It's normal for human beings to go through a crisis of identity. In fact, we will most likely experience more than one as we navigate through different seasons of life. The important thing to know is who we are in Christ so that we learn His ways and not the ways of the world. The letter to the Ephesians gives us a clear look into who we truly are as Christians and the rich inheritance that comes with our new identity.

Take a moment now and pray for the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of your spiritual understanding and to make clear and dear to you what He has for you now and in the life hereafter.

Read Ephesians 1:1–23.

### *Fast Facts ~*

- The letter to the Ephesians was not sent to a singular church building, but to the collective body of believers assembled throughout the city.
- It was most likely couriered by Tychicus, a ministry co-laborer and friend of Paul's.
- It is one of the "prison epistles" (Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon being the others) written during Paul's first Roman imprisonment in AD 60–62.
- Ephesus was a capital city of the Roman province of Asia—an influential, wealthy, sophisticated, very pagan city.
- It was the center of worship of the goddess Diana, one of the wonders of the ancient world.
- This letter focuses on the believer's responsibility to walk in accordance with the calling in Christ Jesus.
- It was not written to correct errors within the church but rather to prevent problems by encouraging the believers to grow up to maturity and to become more aware of their high calling.
- There is emphasis not only on the believer's standing before God but also on spiritual warfare, which is the daily reality of the Christian while here on earth.
- Key chapter: Ephesians 6, which gives clear advice for how to "be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."



*Memory verse:* Ephesians 2:10 NKJV

Write the verse out below; repeat it each day to commit it to memory.

*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

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“The Trinity is the basis of the gospel, and the gospel is a declaration of the Trinity in action.”  
—J.I. Packer

## Day Two: Paul’s Prayer for Spiritual Wisdom

Reread Ephesians 1:15–23.

Once believers understand the hope of God’s calling and the richness of our inheritance, the next step is to realize our access to the power of God through prayer. In verses 15–23, Paul initiates a prayer that concludes in chapter 2. Here he displays not only an apostle’s leadership but also a shepherd’s heart. Paul was a man of prayer and we can only imagine how encouraging it must have been for these young believers in and around Ephesus to hear these words: “I heard of your faith . . . and your love . . . and do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers” (verse 16). He emphasizes the basis and power behind prevailing prayer: *thankfulness*.

1. For what specifically does Paul pray in verse 17?

The revelation of God is divine, it is God making Himself and His Word known in a personal way. Wisdom involves the ability to understand how to apply Scripture to everyday life.

2. Paul prayed that believers would be enlightened to what in the following?
  - a. Verse 18a
  - b. Verse 18b

- c. Verse 19
3. In your own words, what does Paul share about the magnitude of God's power in verses 20–23?

### *Selah ~*

As you've studied Ephesians 1, you've been able to get a glimpse into your true identity and the person you are becoming. Take a moment to consider the questions below and be ready to discuss them with your group.

- Knowing the blessings that are yours in Christ, how do you want this information to affect your Christian walk?
  
- Which spiritual blessing meant the most to you? Why?
  
- How might Paul's prayer in verses 15–23 help guide you in praying for others?

What we see on display in chapter 1 is the big picture of our inheritance as children of God. It is by no means all there is—these are the mere edges of His ways, and each aspect gives us a taste of the entire package, which is within our mind to grasp, within our reach to possess, and within our power to prevail. What would you like to say to God that He took the initiative in your relationship with Him?

## **Day Three: His Grace through Our Faith**

Read Ephesians 2:1–22, focusing on verses 1–10.

Maintaining the right spiritual perspective not only helps us keep things clearly in focus; it also helps in motivating us to do the right thing. When we are able to contrast our former condition with that of our current position in Christ, we appreciate what He has done for us and we want to please Him.

Paul states that at one time we were all dead in trespasses and sins—then further that those who are spiritually dead fall under the influence of the world, the flesh, and Satan. The dynamics of being spiritually dead involve the world's influence from *without*, the influence of the flesh from *within*, and Satan's influence from *beyond*. Paul is not speaking of a segment of society

that has become wicked or depraved, but rather *all humanity*—everyone apart from Christ is dead; they are held captive by the influences of this present evil age. In other words, under enemy control.

1. In order to appreciate the intensity of Paul's words, look for a moment at Romans 3:9–18. What does it say in these verses about the kind of children we were apart from Christ?
  
2. What does Paul declare about our marvelous God before we knew Him in a personal way (verse) 4–5?
  
3. In addition to His indescribable gift of salvation, what else has He done for us (verse 6–7)?
  - a. What do you suppose are some of the “exceeding riches of His grace” yet to be experienced in heaven?
  
4. Personal: According to verses 8–10, how and why did God choose to save you?
  - a. *God saved me by:*
  
  - b. *God saved me so that:*
  
  - c. *God prepared good works beforehand for me.* (What are some of them?)

*Selah~*

Paul exclaims in 2 Corinthians 9:15, “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!” You don’t have to define His gift; you simply have to *live it out* in thanksgiving. How is *your* lifestyle a living expression of your gratitude to Him (what are you giving back out of an overflowing heart)?

## Day Four: Brought Near by His Blood

Reread Ephesians 2:11–22.

It is possible that there may have been some friction between Jewish and Gentile believers that caused Paul to address the relationship between these groups at this point in his letter. The Gentiles were in a hopeless condition before salvation; the Jews were entrusted with God's plan of salvation in the Old Testament. Although the Jews had a special standing before God, their hearts were far from Him; they were not submissive to His will. Both groups were in need of His divine intervention.

1. List the specifics Paul shares about the condition of the Gentiles in verse 12.
2. God did not leave the Jews or Gentiles in their hopeless condition; what did He do (verse 13)?
3. What barrier did Christ break down? How? See verses 14–16.

The written commandments—the Law—had created a barrier between Jew and Gentile that only the death of Christ could break apart. Not only did the cross destroy enmity between God and man, it overcame the human barrier separating us from one another. He made them one in His eyes, resulting in peace. The Father devised the plan; the Son carried out the plan; and the Holy Spirit provided unhindered, permanent access to Him.

4. As a result, what does Paul declare about both the Gentiles and Jews (verse 19)?
  - a. Who is the chief cornerstone of the relationship making it all possible (verse 20)?
  - b. Paul's use of the "building" as a metaphor reveals that both Gentiles and Jews are living "stones." Together what are they forming (verse 21)?

*Selah ~*

Think about it: *your sacrifice—your peace—your cornerstone*. In Christ, all believers are being built into God's temple; together they comprise a place of worship that God Himself inhabits through His Spirit. What does it mean to *you* to be a part of God's dwelling place? See 1 Corinthians 6:19–20. Does He have access to every area of *your* temple? Please explain.

Day Five: *In Touch with Jesus ~*

This section of the lesson is intended to be a review of what you have learned and what God has spoken to you this week. Go back over your lesson with a marking pen or highlighter and mark those places and points that stand out to you. Use the margins to make personal notations. Be sure to indicate which points or questions you'd like to share with your discussion group.

1. *LISTEN*: In what way did the Lord Jesus meet *you* in His Word this week? Be specific.

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2. *LEARN*: How can you apply this understanding to your daily Christian walk?

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3. *LIVE*: Take the next step of obedience and record the difference it makes in your life.

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*Prayer Requests ~*

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