

**THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS**

1. This is one of the 4 Pauline Prison Epistles. The Pauline Prison Epistles are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon.
2. In the book of Galatians, the problem was about proud people who thought that they could add to the perfect work of Christ by their own works! The book of Galatians therefore emphasized what was doctrinal and focused on the issue of Sola Fide which is believing in Christ's finished work alone.
3. The book of Ephesians is a balanced book between doctrine and duty, and between justification and salvation.
4. This is a general letter, not a personal letter or a problem-specific (e.g. false teaching as in the book of Galatians) letter. It was to educate them about the Christian faith and duty. Not many personal names were mentioned in this book. Paul spent 2 years in Ephesus and yet there was no name mentioned in this letter. Hence we can conclude that this is a general letter.
5. Acts 18 to Acts 20 mentioned the Ephesian church. The Ephesian church was the most mentioned church in the New Testament. Timothy was pastoring this church and the Apostle John wrote the epistles of 1 John, 2 John and 3 John in Ephesus.
6. The city of Ephesus is in the present day Turkey.
  - a) It was at the crossroads of trade. It was an economic and religious centre because a meteorite fell and landed in Ephesus. This meteorite was a black shiny stone with many lumps that looked like a female breast and it was worshipped in the temple of the Goddess Diana (Greek name is Artemis).
  - b) Basically it was a breasted idol which attracted lustful eyes and it represented milk or productivity. Silver replicas were made as major tourist souvenirs for the tourism business.
  - c) Paul destroyed this business, so he was chased out of the city.

**Structure of the book of Ephesians**

The structure is very simple.

1. Chapters 1 to 3 are about how God gives salvation i.e. how we are saved. It is about the doctrine of Justification by Faith alone.
2. Chapters 4 to 6 are about how those who are saved should now bless others! It is about the duty and doctrine of Sanctification by Faith. We have tasted this agape love of God and so we must give out this agape love.

As such, due to its simplicity, the book of Ephesians is the best book to use to present our faith versus the book of Romans.

**Theme of the book of Ephesians**

1. Christ is the Head of the Church. The Church is the multi-ethnic, universal body of Christ.

2. Christ shows the world that God is love. Christ is the Word of God to express God's love.
3. Therefore, the Church is to show the agape love of God to the world.

### Chapter 1

1. Ephesians 1:3. Bless us in Christ.
  - a) We thought it was "Blessed by Christ." The phrase "In Him" is often seen in book of Ephesians.
  - b) "God sees me not as Paul Choo but He sees me in Christ", in His righteousness. It is not the same as a sprinkling of blessing by somebody. To be blessed in Christ means whatever He has is mine! It is unity with Christ, one with Christ as Galatians 2:20 which says "Christ lives in me". This phrase seem to miniaturise Christ, so perhaps it is more accurate to say, "The Holy Spirit lives in me". The Spirit of Christ lives in me. The Holy Spirit is the third person in the Trinity!
  - c) "We are in Christ" is a better phrase because it shows He is bigger and we are smaller. We have to grasp this truth by faith!
  - d) Ephesians 1:3 says we are blessed with "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."
2. Ephesians 1:7-8, We again see the phrase "In Him",
  - a) we have redemption,
  - b) we have forgiveness of sins, and
  - c) we have been lavished with the riches of His grace and wisdom and all the insights of Christ. These are to be received by simple faith.
3. Ephesians 1:10. Christ is to unite all things in Him.
  - a) Christ will be Head of everything and everyone in heaven and on Earth, eventually in the fullness of times.
  - b) Now Christ is the Head of a united Church, later He will be the Head of a united heaven and Earth!
4. Ephesians 1: 18-20. We are given enlightenment of the eyes of the heart to know the riches of the glory of His inheritance and His immeasurable power given to us! All these are working in us!
5. Ephesians 1:22-23.
  - a) Jesus used to have a physical body that only some Jews see. But now, we, the Church, is His body that the world sees! And we are filled with His power and might to let all people see God's agape love!
  - b) The question is, "Are we showing God's love of the Church? Or are we just hiding in church and studying the Bible? Does the world see God's love?"

### Chapter 2

1. Ephesians 2:1-3. We were all dead in sins before salvation, dead to God and dead to others. What's the goal of being saved?

2. Ephesians 2:10. We are Christ's workmanship, created in Christ for good works, not for bible study! It is more about walk than talk! Walk out of church and go into the world.
3. Ephesians 2:11-12. The Gentiles used not to have hope as they were separated from Christ! There used to be a huge division between the Jews and the Gentiles. Before Christ came, the faith of the Old Testament was a national religion of the Jews like all other religions (which were nationally bounded) but in the New Testament, we have one Church, one body that is multi-national to represent Him in the whole world.
4. Even at the time of Paul's writing of the books of Galatians and Ephesians, there was still a big divide. Jews told believing Gentiles to get circumcised! The church at the time was like other religions, identified by their clothing, language (religious books which are not translated), and their culture. Unfortunately, western churches imposed many western cultures on others too.

### Chapter 3

1. This talks about Paul's unique role as an apostle to the Gentiles (or the world). Paul reached the known Roman world at that time. Paul was amazed that he, who persecuted the Church, was chosen to do this honourable job! It was ground-breaking at that time.
2. Ephesians 3:18-19. The love of Christ surpasses all knowledge and is filled with all the fullness of God! Paul's prayer for us is to grasp this agape love! Only when we understand all this love, and can we show it to others. Chapters 4 to 6 described our duty to bless the world.

### Chapter 4

1. Ephesians 4:1. Walk in a manner worthy of our calling --it did not say sit and learn only. We must walk out to reach the needy and help the poor! Is it 99% in classroom and 1% outside like what most Christians practise today?
2. Ephesians 4:2-6. Begin walking by ensuring unity in Church and bearing one another in love (in the Church) with oneness. It means not to have cliques and look down on the uneducated. It is about coming down to reach the poor and the uneducated! Classroom bible study tends to go up (intellectual) and makes us think we know so much!
3. Ephesians 4:11. Spiritual gifts are given with diversity in oneness. It is unity but not uniformity.
4. Ephesians 4:12 says to equip the saints to build up the body of Christ. Serve so that others can grow and learn to serve! Maturity is not about being smart and growing in head knowledge but about being matured to be like Christ!
5. Ephesians 4:22-24.
  - a) Put off your old habits. Put off SELF (because we are used to only do things that make ourselves happy) and serve ourselves! Put aside your selfish and self-indulgent ways. It is an upside down economy in God's Kingdom.

- b) So put on the new man piece by piece in a practical way.
- c) As we put off and on, we become more like Christ, less like Satan!

### Chapter 5

1. Ephesians 5:1-2. Be imitators of God and walk in love just like Christ loves us and gave Himself for us. Give yourself like Christ gave Himself.
2. Question is, “Are you giving or trying to receive only?” E.g. I like this church because they look after me well.
3. Question is, “Do we see ourselves needing to be like Christ or is it only to know about Christ? It is a world of difference between the two.
4. Agape love is to pay attention, not attract attention like Eros love. You have to look out for people with needs and serve them to express God’s love. We are to walk in love.
5. Ephesians 5:18. We are to be filled with the Spirit and not be drunk with wine or for our own pleasure, feeding ourselves. “Filled with the Spirit” – just like you keep filling yourself with your favourite food, fill yourself with the Spirit continuously.
6. Ephesians 5:19. The first evidence of being filled with the Spirit is that the person is always rejoicing, praising God all the time. Your heart is so filled with God’s love that your heart is always singing, even in private.
7. Ephesians 5: 20. The second evidence of being filled with the Spirit is you are always thankful (not complaining) about everything, not just good things e.g. sunshine, beautiful flowers, etc.
8. Ephesians 5:21. The third evidence is that you are able to submit to one another! Just like Christ humbled Himself, we have the humble Spirit of Christ.
9. Ephesians 5:22-24. Wives are to submit to their husbands. If the wife cannot submit to her husband, how can she claim she is able to submit to Christ? It is the same process of humbling yourself. Submit to your husband as to the Lord.
10. Ephesians 6:1-3. Children are to submit to their parents as to the Lord.
11. Ephesians 6:5-9. Servants are to submit to their earthly boss as to Christ!
  - a) Our own nature is always asking “Who are you to tell me what to do?” We think we are the masters of our own destinies and so we do what we like!
  - b) So, submission in Ephesians 5:22 – 6:9 is God’s way of training us to submit to Christ. We have not learned submission (“put on this now” habit) till we have learned to submit as in Ephesians 5:22 – 6:9. We (our old selves) are lousy masters of ourselves and we messed up our lives with our rebellious selves.
12. Of course, it does not mean the husband or parent or boss can bully you! Christ never bullies us, He loves us!

### Last part of Chapter 6 is about Spiritual Warfare

1. Ephesians 6:10. Be strong “in the Lord”, not by the Lord.
2. Ephesians 6:11-12. The spiritual warfare is permanently there; there is no start date or end date! Satan fights hard to make us fall at every opportunity.
3. Ephesians 6:14-19. This is the armour of God.

- a) The Belt of Truth is the key piece of the armour to keep balance and to hold up the whole armour of God in place! We need a balance of doctrine and duty to hold us so that we can walk in balance.
- b) The Breastplate of Righteousness. This is the Roman soldier's most central piece to protect the vital organ of the heart. We dare to go into any battle because we have Christ's given righteousness. We can stand before God regardless of what the Devil says.
- c) Good shoes are needed to bring the Gospel out to reach the world. Many Christians dare not go out and they get hurt easily and then they run back to the church.
- d) The Shield of Faith is needed to prevent doubts sown by the Devil. We are to hold simple faith in the promises of God. Know that God hears us because we are in Christ.
- e) The Helmet of Salvation is the solid piece that protects our head. We are guaranteed to go to heaven regardless of what happens. Jesus said, "It is finished".
- f) The Sword of the Spirit. We have to use the Word of God. See Hebrews 4:12. This is the only aggressive piece of the armour. One verse of the Bible can pierce a life.
- g) Ephesians 6:18 says "Pray always (at all times) in the Spirit". Although prayer is not part of the armour, prayer is critical.
- h) The Roman armour has no back defence! It is sure death to turn around and run! So, the Christian soldier can only go forward, no turning back. Sometimes he may have to stand still and re-charge but never to turn back!

#### What have we learned in the book of Ephesians?

1. God has given us the riches of our salvation with unbelievable inheritance and filled with the love of God.
2. The love of God will flow out of us unless we are like the Dead Sea! All fishes in the Dead Sea die! Dead Sea Christians read and study but have never given out the love of God. Dead Sea Christians wonder why when they have never missed church, etc. yet they feel empty and miserable! There is no life in them. What flows in must flow out! E.g. what you eat must be passed out, otherwise you will die.
3. Agape love is given to us by God and it must be shown through the Church, the body of Christ.

