
19b. Epistle to the Ephesians

Although questions about authorship and audience persist, Ephesians and its treatment of major doctrines makes it one of the most important Pauline letters.

Occasional Situation of Ephesians

The Context of Ephesians

- **Ephesus**, the traditional addressee, was the scene of over two years of missionary effort in Paul's "second" missionary journey (see Acts 19:1-41)
 - he may have been imprisoned here, if there is where Paul was when he wrote early imprisonment letters such as Philippians
 - Chose not to visit it during his "third" missionary journey but rather called the Ephesian elders to a visit in nearby Miletus (see Acts 20:17-38)
- Ephesus was the **capital of the important province of Asia** and was closely connected to the other major cities of province
 - The later letters to Timothy and those attributed to John portray Ephesus as the headquarters of the various churches in the province
- ***Little in this letter ties it to a particular situation, rather it deals with broad subjects such as the Church and the believer's place in God's larger plan***

Overview of Ephesians

- Authenticity
 - Even more secular scholars consider this letter **pseudonymous**
 - **The author, however, identifies himself as Paul (1:1; 3:1; cf. 3:7, 13; 4:1; 6:19-20), and latter-day revelation suggests no other author.**
- Date
 - Like Colossians, Ephesians was probably written A.D. 61-63 from Rome
 - If pseudonymous, it may have been written in the A.D. 80's from Ephesus.
- To: "Paul . . . to the saints" (1:1)
 - **Many early manuscripts lack "which are at Ephesus!" (more in literary section below)**
- Unity and Integrity
 - The unity of this letter is not debated
- Focuses
 - Rather than respond to a particular occasion or problem, this letter talks about **the Church in universal terms and illustrates how God accomplishes his purposes in the Christian community**
 - Ephesians reflects a perspective of the cosmic nature of God's plan and the believer's place in it.

Literary Questions about Ephesians

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*WHAT KIND OF LETTER IS IT? WHAT KIND OF WRITING AND
 RHETORIC DOES PAUL USE IN IT? HOW IS THE LETTER
 STRUCTURED?*

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A Circular Letter?

- **Many early manuscripts lack “which are at Ephesus”**
 - **Contains repeated references to “all the saints”**
 - Lacks the usual list of named greetings at the end (see 6:21–23)
- These factors have led many to believe that this was **a circular letter (encyclical)** meant to be copied and sent to many churches in the province of Asia
 - According to Raymond’s Brown’s rubric, this is an **epistle** rather than a letter

Structure of Ephesians

- **Opening Formula** (1:1-2)
- **Thanksgiving Doxology** (1:3-23, unusually long!)
 - Praise of God for what he has done for “us” (1:3-14)
 - Praise of God for what he has done for “you” (1:15-23)
- **Body** (2:1-6:20)
 - Pauline Indicative (2:1-3:13)
 - *Intercessory Prayer* (3:14-21)
 - Pauline Imperative (4:1-6:20)
- **Concluding Formula** (6:21-24)

Teachings and Admonitions in Ephesians

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“I therefore, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called . . . Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” (Ephesians 4:1-6)

Paul and “Predestination” Again

- “According as **he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: **Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself**, according to the good pleasure of his will . . . In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will... (1:4–5, 11–12)
 - **“Us, still in the plural, perhaps suggesting again corporate predestination**
 - **Predestine** = “decide from the beginning or beforehand, predestine; set apart from the beginning or beforehand (*proorizō*); see Acts 17:26
 - “. . . marking us out for himself beforehand, to be **adopted sons, through Jesus Christ**.” (1:5 NJB; cf. “spirit of adoption” in Romans 8:15)

Usual LDS Readings of Predestination Revisited

- **LDS Doctrine of foreordination is about individual status, not corporate**
 - ***Exposition: often using a passage to teach another truth but not necessarily the original (exegetical) meaning***
- “Foreordination is like any other blessing — **it is a conditional bestowal subject to our faithfulness**. Prophecies foreshadow events without determining the outcome, because of a divine foreseeing of outcomes. So foreordination is a conditional bestowal of a role, a responsibility, or a blessing which, likewise, foresees but does not fix the outcome.” (Neal A. Maxwell, “A More Determined Discipleship,” *Ensign* [Feb. 1979], 70-71)
 - Cf. the individual promises of a patriarchal blessing
 - Cf. “There are many called but few are chosen [elected] . . .” (D&C 121:34)
 - The need to make our “calling and election” “sure”

Holy Spirit of Promise

Exegesis

- “. . . after that ye believed, ye were sealed with **that holy Spirit of promise**, which is **the earnest of our inheritance** until the redemption of the purchased possession.” (1:13–14)
- **The earnest of our inheritance** = a pledge or a down payment
 - “The Holy Spirit of Promise is the Holy Ghost who places the stamp of approval upon every ordinance: baptism, confirmation, ordination, marriage. **The promise is that the blessings will be received through faithfulness.**” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:45)
 - The Holy Spirit of Promise is the ratifying power of the Holy Ghost, applied when we have been true and faithful to our covenants and are worthy of the promised blessings
 - **This ratifying stamp can be applied and removed as our faithfulness changes**
 - This accords with Paul’s “earnest (or pledge) of our inheritance”

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Holy Spirit of Promise

Other Possibilities (Exposition)

- But the Holy Spirit of Promise also raises tantalizing suggestions about **the Second Comforter** who declares that our election is sure
 - “I send upon you another Comforter, even upon you my friends, that it may abide in your hearts, even the Holy Spirit of Promise; **which other Comforter is the same that I promised unto my disciples, as recorded in the testimony of John.**” (D&C 88:3)
 - “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you **another Comforter [second], that he may abide with you forever**; even the Spirit of truth... But **the comforter [first], which is the Holy Ghost**, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” (John 14:16, 26)

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Saved by Grace

Pauline Indicative: From Death to Life (2:1–10)

- “For **by grace are ye saved through faith**; and that not of yourselves: *it is the gift of God: **Not of works***, lest any man should boast.” (2:8–9)
 - **are ye saved**: Salvation, perhaps broader than the straightforward justification of Galatians and Romans (see next slide)
 - Increased emphasis on “**saving**” grace (= redeeming power of the atonement)
 - Resurrection: free gift, “unconditional grace”
 - Redemption: the gift of forgiveness that comes with justification, still a gift but one that we put ourselves in a position to receive, sometimes termed “conditional grace” which comes in return for faith
 - **through faith**: not just belief but **trust** in Christ that causes us to take him at his word, *lay hold of the gift that he offers*
 - **Exposition**: *taking Christ at his word means trusting that when we believe in him, repent, and are baptized we will be forgiven!*
 - **Not of works**: not specifically “the works of the law” of Galatians, *so this may be broader than the ceremonial requirements of the Mosaic Law and may, in fact, include all ordinances and good acts*

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Grace and Works

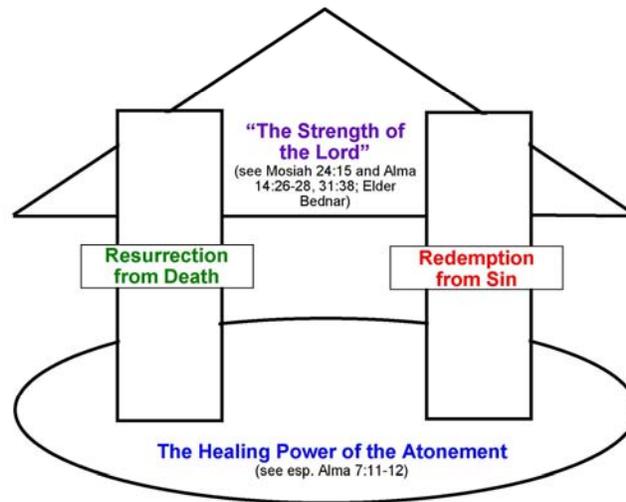
- For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus unto good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”
 - “**effectual**” grace = Elder Bednar’s “strengthening and enabling power of the atonement” (October 2001 BYU address, November 2005 General Conference)
 - “. . . It is likewise through the grace of the Lord that individuals, through faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ and repentance of their sins, **receive strength and assistance to do good works that they otherwise would not be able to maintain if left to their own means.**” (BD, 697)
- **Being “in Christ” and conforming to the “law of the spirit” requires us to follow Christ . . . which we could not do without his grace!**
 - “Wherefore, ye must **press forward with a steadfastness in Christ**, having a perfect brightness of hope, and **a love of God and of all men**. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and **endure to the end**, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.” (2 Nephi 31:20)

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The Graces of Christ: The Saving, Healing, and Enabling Power of the Atonement



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Developing Pauline Terminology and Insights

- Paul’s use of some words—such as “faith,” “sin,” “law,” “adoption,” etc.—is a moving target
 - Their nuances and application sometimes change from letter to letter
- What clearly means one thing given the occasional nature of one letter sometimes broadens or is replied in another
 - Galatians
 - Justification is by the faith/faithfulness of Christ and not the works of the law [of Moses]
 - “Grace” used 7 times, only twice clearly in connection with justification
 - “Sin” refers to our fallen, natural state and our propensity to sin
 - Romans
 - Justification is by faith, increasingly in Jesus Christ, and it by grace or “as a free gift”
 - “Grace” used 24 times, 17 clearly in relation to justification
 - Law of Moses = law of sin, law of the flesh but there are new references to the law of the spirit, law of God, law of Christ
 - Still refers to “Sin” but sometimes to “sins”
 - Ephesians
 - Salvation by grace through faith
 - Frequent reference to sins

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Pauline Indicative Continued (2:1-3:21)

- **One in Christ (2:11-22)**
 - “For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, **Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone**; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” (2:18-22)
 - *“of the household of God” looks forward to Paul’s discussion of the “Household Code” in 5:21-6:9*
- **Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles (3:1-13)**
 - “This mystery is that *through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body*, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power.” (3:6-7 NIV)

Intercessory Prayer (3:14-21)

- **Paul’s Prayer for the Saints**
 - “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; **That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith**; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God..” (3:14-19)
- **Paul’s Praise of God (doxology)**
 - “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, **Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.**” (3:20-21)

Pauline Imperative (4:1–6:20)

- First Exhortation: **Unity in the Church** (4:1–16)
 - “I therefore, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called . . . Endeavouring to **keep the unity of the Spirit** in the bond of peace. **There is one body, and one Spirit**, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” (4:1–6)
 - “**And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith,** and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” (4:11–13)
- Second Exhortation: Rules for a new life (4:17–5:2)
- Third Exhortation: Renouncing Pagan Ways (5:3–20)

Fourth Exhortation: Serving Each Other (Household Code, 5:21–6:9)

- **Greco-Roman society had hierarchal expectations of each member of the household: Paul tempers this with the gospel requirements of love, service, and reciprocity**
- **Mutual submission and responsibilities**
 - **Wives and Husbands (5:21–33)**
 - “**Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.** For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.” (5:22–24)
 - Think of “presiding” over families rather than ruling
 - “**Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it . . .** So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.” (5:25–28)
 - **Children and Parents (6:1–4)**
 - “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother . . .” (6:1–2)
 - And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” (6:4)
 - **Slaves and Masters (6:5–9)**

Fifth Exhortation: Put on the Whole Armor of God (6:10-18)



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- “Finally, my brethren, **be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.** For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, **against spiritual wickedness in high places.** Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. **Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:** Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”
 - against spiritual wickedness in high places: better, “**against spiritual forces of evil in the supernatural realm**”
 - Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth . . . See D&C 27:15-18)

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