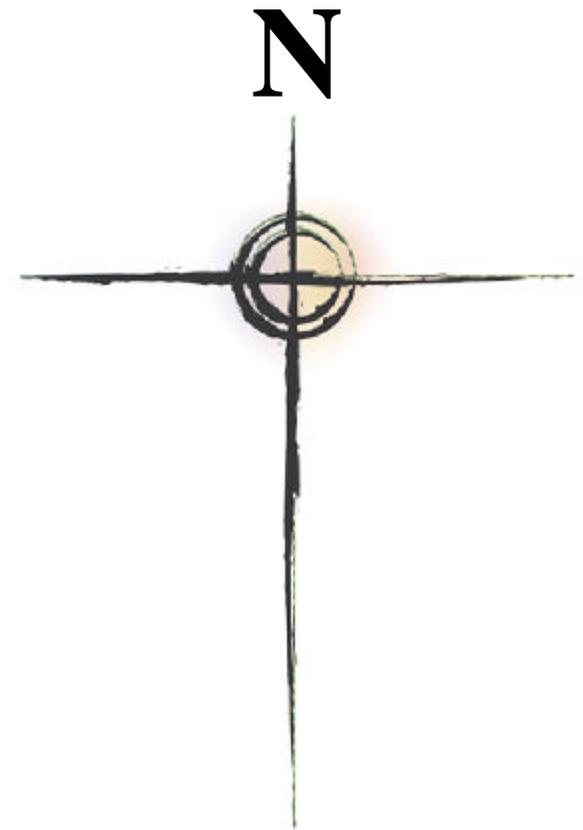


**IN the company
of CHRIST**



EPHESIANS

Contents

Prayer week 5

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Prayer week 6

Introductions

Ephesians 1.1-2

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: ² Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Big Idea

We are introduced to the main characters of the letter to the Ephesians: God; King Jesus; the apostle Paul; and the saints in Ephesus.

To Whom it may Concern ...

Paul's time in Ephesus was one of the most concentrated and fruitful periods of ministry we know of. Read Acts 19.8-41; 20.13-38.

1. How long did Paul spend in Ephesus?

Over 2 years.

2. What evidence is there that Paul made close relationships during this time?

The Ephesians cared that he was in danger if he went to the theatre.

They cried at his departure to Jerusalem because they would not see him again.

The earliest and best manuscripts of what we know as 'Paul's letter to the Ephesians' did not contain 'in Ephesus'. This, in some way, explains the absence of any personal references given. He spent so much time there and there was a mutual love and concern. The best guess is that the letter was originally addressed to a number of new churches surrounding the regional centre of Ephesus.

3. If Paul's letter is to a number of new churches (that he did not plant but that he was responsible for as the apostle to the Gentiles) in a particular region, how would this affect the subject matter?

It would tend to be general to some extent but have details that are germane to the region of Ephesus.

Ephesus – Temple Warden

Ephesus was the most important city in Asia Minor. It was on the trade routes of land and sea which not only made it rich but also influential. The temple to Diana was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Coins from Ephesus bore the inscription 'TEMPLE WARDEN' – the temple dominated Ephesus in the same way that Ephesus dominated the region.

Pagan worship was little better than magic and magic was a big part of what went on in Ephesus. It was a place where you could, for a price, purchase magical power and influence for health, protection and influence. The temple was also a bank for the region. Life in Ephesus was dominated by Diana.

4. How does Paul's ministry in Ephesus and his letter connect with the cult of Artemis?
Magic is a dominant theme in the Acts passage and in Ephesus God's power in Christ is to the fore front as well as the passage at the end on the devil's schemes and how to combat his wiles.

Paul the Apostle

Paul identifies himself as an 'apostle of Christ Jesus'. An 'apostle' is a 'sent one' an emissary – an ambassador with a message.

5. Read v2. How is this a summary of the message Paul is entrusted with?
The Gospel is the declaration that God the Father has acted to reconcile those who are his enemies, who have wronged him and rebelled against him – this is an act of grace that has brought about peace.

6. The most important detail about an emissary is who they are an emissary for and what authority they have.

- a. Whose apostle is Paul?
Christ Jesus
- b. By whose authority is Paul an apostle?
God's

The Saints are coming ...

7. In the Old Testament the terms 'saints' is frequently used in the Psalms to refer to God's people. Whoever this letter was to, it wasn't to a predominantly Jewish audience but in Christ something amazing has happened. What is it? Eph. 2.11-13
The Gentiles get in on the blessings of God's people as was promised so long ago and we get in through Jesus.

Of course being a saint means to be different because you belong to God. This change in status was because they were now 'in Christ' and being in Christ controlled their whole life.

Three ways to Live

There are three ways to live as God's people in the world;

Prayer week 1

Prayer week 2

6. Why must we be saved by grace and not works?

Because we are dead spiritually—dead people don't do anything. Unless we grasp this we just won't get what has happened.

7. In v 8 Paul tells us that the faith, by which we attach ourselves to Christ and are saved, is a gift. Did it feel like a gift to you or something you did?

Of course it feels like something we do, that's why we need to understand that we were once dead. A person who is dead and is brought back to life takes a breath—they suck in air and blood cells are oxygenated. We are made alive in Christ—so we breath spiritually—believe God's gospel.

8. Why can't we boast about being saved v9

Salvation is all a gift, it's not based on anything we do—we need to be incredibly grateful.

9. What have we been saved for v10?

Good works prepared in advance for us to do.

10. What do you think those good works are?

Read the rest of Ephesians if you want the long answer

Accommodation

Crusade

Subversion

Accommodation

When we accommodate we blend in with the surrounding culture. We avoid standing out from the crowd or being different.

Crusade

When we go on a crusade we are aggressive and take no captives. Crusaders don't 'dialogue' they only give the answers.

Subversion

Define what it means to be subversive.

Subversion may appear to the crusader as accommodation and to the 'accommodator' as crusading but it is neither. Subversion understands that a head-on attack normally makes opposition more entrenched. Subversion lives and tells the truth 'slant' so that it slips under the radar and captures people unaware. The ministry of Jesus is full of subversion, as was Paul's.

Discuss which of these three ways to live best describes the shape of Paul's ministry in Ephesus and our status as 'saints'.

A saint is separate from the surrounding culture so accommodation is not an option. Paul's ministry in Ephesus was public but it was not crusader-like. Paul dialogued – he didn't call for the destruction of the Temple of Artemis. His ministry was counter-cultural but not abusive.

Thinking of Paul's ministry in Ephesus and your ministry in Sydney, which of these three terms best describes the way you live in the world?

Study 2 Ephesians 1.3-14

The Geography of Grace

Ephesians 1.3-14

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸ that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. ⁹ And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfilment— to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. ¹¹ In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. ¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of his glory.

Big Idea

The way we negotiate the Geography of Grace is by Jesus. Nothing God is doing happens outside of him or without him.

1. Re-write the above passage but remove any reference to Jesus (continue over the page).
2. Describe the effect of removing Jesus from this passage.

Removing Jesus disconnects God's action from any substantive concrete reality. We are left with fuzzy feelings rather than a link to the Jesus who lived, ate, spoke, died and rose again to bring the new age of the Spirit into being.

Removing Jesus makes this passage sound very 'New Age-y'.

Jesus is the 'north pole' of all of God's actions — the 'this side up' of all his purposes

2. Does Paul think that the Jews are exempt from this condition of slavery v3?

No Paul recognises that he (a Jew) lived among these three realities at one time.

3. Philippians 3.4b says, 'If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. ', does this sound like someone who gratified the cravings of our sinful nature and follow its desires and thoughts?

No not really for goodness sake Paul calls himself faultless in regards to legalistic righteous.

This extra ordinary statement gives us a profound insight into the nature of sin. On the outside Paul would have looked 'faultless' while some of readers (some may have been Temple prostitutes) had a life far from 'perfect'. So how is it that Paul can equate his 'righteous life' to someone whose life had broken down? To understand what is in common requires that we stop looking on the outside and look at the inside—the heart and motives. Paul rejected Jesus as the Christ and relied on his own righteousness, but as he says in Galatians, if righteousness could be gained through the law why did Christ die.

The irony was that Paul had used the law, which was intended to demonstrate Israel's need for a savior, to demonstrate his 'righteousness'. Paul depended on himself and not God in the same way any other sinner would.

4. If the Ephesians were once dead what has happened now v6 in Christ?

We have been raised up with Christ and seated with him in the heavenly realms.

5. 'When we trust Jesus he shares our death so we might share his life'. How does Eph. 2.1-10 demonstrate this?

He dies our death so we might share his resurrection life and life a new life for God.

Study 6

Ephesians 2.1-10

Changing Places

Ephesians 2.1-10

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. ⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Big Idea

Paul gives us a snapshot of what happens when we become of God's people. Understanding what God has done changes the way we see ourselves.

Paul in chapter 2 again uses the pronouns 'you', 'us' and 'we' so we need to be sensitive to this and note how it shapes his conversation.

1. How does Paul describe the spiritual condition his Gentile readers were in before they can trust Jesus?

Dead in trespasses and sins

Followed the way of

the world

The ruler of the air

without him summing up and focusing and interpreting God's actions. God himself becomes the ill-defined mass of popular belief.

3. Why does it make sense evangelistically to get people to read a gospel if you want to introduce them to the true and living God?

Reading one of the gospels gets you in contact with the Jesus who re-presents God to us in flesh and blood.

4. It may well be that you have read this passage many times and not paid much attention to the pronouns 'us' and 'we' and 'you'. Read it again and describe what you now notice.

Paul is making a distinction between himself (and others 'us' and 'we') and those who have recently come to be included in Christ.

We are so used to reading the Bible as if it is all about us that we miss these significant shifts in focus. For Paul, the Jew, the history of Israel—the Old Testament and the gospels— is not an irrelevancy to what God is doing now. It forms the basis of the inclusion of the non-Jews (you).

Paul is doing is what Jesus did and therefore what our gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) report; Jesus sums up, and is the point of focus that makes sense of the Israel story.

With this in mind...

5. Who do you think are the 'us' and the 'we' in v3-12?

Paul is outlining God's purpose for Israel and particularly believing Israel. They were the chosen people who were to be a light to the Gentiles and bring them out of the darkness of idolatry.

Jews, like Paul (the disciples and others), were saved so as to fulfil God's plan promised long ago to Abraham (Gen 12.1-3) but now fulfilled in Jesus.

6. Who do you think the 'you' is in v13-14?

They are the Gentiles who have come to trust in Jesus and have been given the Holy Spirit.

7. How does the book of Acts demonstrate what Paul is saying here?

Acts begins in Jerusalem and goes to the ends of the earth through the power of the Holy Spirit who indwells those who are his people.

Paul is saying that the Gentiles are, through Jesus, getting in on the best things that God had promised his people Israel. In Christ, they have access to the very best that God can offer — the new world that is coming.

8. Ephesians 1.2-14 has been described as having a strong Trinitarian flavour. What case can be made to support this claim?

Father v2 Son—Jesus Christ Son etc v2-13 Holy Spirit v14

9. On whom does the emphasis fall in the passage — the Father, Son or Holy Spirit?

The Son.

10. Why does the emphasis fall in this way?

Because the Son, through his works, shows us the Father and through the work of the Son, the Holy Spirit is given to bring creation to its climax.

6. Does the question, 'If God has already decided what he is going to do, why pray?', represent the God who shows up in Jesus?

The answer has to be a big no. We all too easily abstract God from the particulars of his revelation of himself—in creation, in history, ultimately in Jesus. He is personal and relational. I want to suggest that we abstract the God of Jesus, to some extent, when we speak about the sovereignty of God, or the love of God instead of the God who is sovereign and the God who is love.

If the way we pose a question makes us deal with an impersonal, abstracted philosophical ideal we have stopped reading our Bible.

7. So what happens when we pray?

Of course there is the cry of our heart when things go wrong, 'Father if you are willing take this cup from me.' but there is also the greater desire, 'but not my will but yours be done.'

When we pray we are lining up our lives and purposes with God plan and purposes and joining him in the great work of recreation.

We are expressing the father son (child) relationship.

8. What encourages you to pray?

9. How can your HOMEchurch encourage you to pray?

1. Identify in Ephesians 1.3-15 the choosing and predestining words and the number of times those words are used in the passage?

Word	Frequency
Chose	x3
Before the creation of the world	
Predestined	
According to the pleasure of his will	x2
Purposed	x2

2. What do you think happens when you ask God for something?

There is in a sense no right answer to this—we are asking them what they think.

3. Do you think prayer affects God in any way?

There is in a sense no right answer to this—we are asking them what they think.

4. Do you think Paul believes God listens to and acts according to Paul's prayers?

There has to be a sense in which Paul believes God listens to and acts on prayers that are prayed.

5. Read 2 Corinthians 11.7-10. How does these verses shed light on prayer and how God responds to it?

Well he doesn't always give us what we want but he acts to make us more like Christ and know him more. It shows us that the God of the Bible is personal and concerned, even when we don't get what we want.

Study 3

Ephesians 1.3-14

Theology on Fire

Ephesians 1.3-14

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸ that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. ⁹ And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfilment— to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. ¹¹In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹²in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. ¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of his glory.

Big Idea

Paul's 'introduction' is one long praise sentence recounting what God has done and is doing in Jesus. We need to put our theology into praise.

Paul begins his letter 'to the Ephesians' with one great, long, sustained, rising sentence of praise. Praising God is at the heart of the life of the people of God and learning how to do that well is an aspect of maturity both as individuals and as a community.

1. What makes you happy?

This is an opening question that gets people thinking. You might need to push them. They could be a little embarrassed because most of what makes us happy is so connected to 'me' in every respect.

2. What makes you praise the LORD?

Normally when something good happens to us. Too often our praise is locked into our happiness.

Praise in Israel was shaped by the Psalms which enabled them by themselves and in corporate worship to express every aspect of life—the highs and the lows.

The final Psalm was a fitting end to all the multi-layered, multi-faceted expressions of faith in the LORD.

Psalm 150:1-6

*Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty heavens.
² Praise him for his acts of power;
praise him for his surpassing greatness.
³ Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,
praise him with the harp and lyre,
⁴ praise him with tambourine and dancing,
praise him with the strings and flute,
⁵ praise him with the clash of cymbals,
praise him with resounding cymbals.
⁶ Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.
Praise the LORD.*

3. What reasons does the Psalmist give to praise God?

Praise him for his acts of power, praise him for his surpassing greatness.

4. The Psalmist's passion for the whole of the orchestra to engage in the praise of God culminates in the call/command he makes in v6. What is the Psalmist's great desire?

To see everything—every living creature praise the LORD. Cf Philippians 2.

Study 5

Ephesians 1.15-23

Predestination & Prayer

Ephesians 1.15-23

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, ²⁰which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²²And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Big Idea

Predestination for Paul does not make prayer redundant; it makes it personal and sharp as he prays for the resurrection power of God in Christ to be at work in his readers.

At times we have problems holding in tension, what appear to be, to us at least, two contradictory ideas. Paul, appears to have no such problem—he seems very at home with talking about prayer immediately after talking about the sovereign God. But even more than that, he makes the basis of his prayer the God who is sovereign and is bringing everything to its conclusion in Christ. We ask 'how does it all work?' If God is sovereign, why pray?

A rich and glorious inheritance.

9. What will being enlightened about our glorious hope help us do in the here and now?

To keep on, keep focussed on Christ, keep faithful and keep loving.

Prayer Point 3 - Enlightened about the power at work in us v19-23

10. What does Paul compare the 'strength of the power at work within us' to?

The power that God exerted when he raised Jesus from the dead and raised Him to the position of LORD, putting everything at his feet.

11. What is the connection between Christ and the church and his victorious exaltation?

Christ is the head of the church—so what happens to the head happens to the body. We will rule with Christ in the new age.

12. Look up the following references to power in Ephesians: Eph. 3.16, 18, 20; 6.10. Summarise how God's power works in us and for us now.

God's power is creative and not simply a show of strength. It is exerted so that we may be changed and become like Christ.

13. Where do you need God's creative power at work in your life?

5. How has Paul taken note of the Psalmists call in his introduction of praise in Ephesians?

This is exactly what Paul does—he is retelling the acts of power the Lord has accomplished in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. This is the demonstration of his surpassing greatness—the man's wisdom, man's power subverting action of salvation in Jesus surpasses any human idea or ideal.

Praise is not firstly about us, that is, the purpose of our singing is neither our enjoyment or to gain an emotional high. Praise is about God and who He is and what He has done in Jesus.

It is giving God the glory

- and when we do that we give him joy

- and when we do that we express our heart's joy

- and when we do that we encourage one another.

6. Below there are two spaces. In the first, write a Psalm of thanks like Paul's — a Psalm that praises the LORD for what he has done in the world in Jesus. In the second space write a Psalm of thanksgiving for what has been done through Jesus in your life.

Life of the World:

My Life:

Discuss in your group what this process did for you.

Study 4 Ephesians 1.15-23

Theology on Its Knees

Ephesians 1.15-23

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, ²⁰which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²²And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Big Idea

For Paul, the gospel is not only a point of praise, it is the basis of his prayer for the Ephesians. Paul wants the Ephesians to have a sense of just how big a world they now inhabit through Jesus, and to have his resurrection life alive in them.

What do we pray for each other? Sometimes it can boil down to little more than 'happy thoughts' or a general attitude toward the other person that they will be 'all right'. It's no wonder we find intercession, praying for others, at times tedious and uninspiring. Paul's prayers in contrast were beefy and sharp with the focus of God's Christ-filled purposes in the lives of others.

1. How does v15 locate Paul's thanks for the Ephesians back into v3-14 and the great plan of God in Christ?

Paul thanks God for the Ephesians because their faith is an example of His power and grace in their life (v13). It is also an out-working of His plan and purposes going back to

before time and forward into the new age.

2. What are the two characteristics of the Ephesians that demonstrate the power of God in their life?

Their faith in the Lord Jesus and their love for all the saints.

3. What does it mean to have 'faith in the Lord Jesus'?

It means to have faith that the One who was humbled in the obedience of a crucified dying by the powers that be, is in his rising declared to be the rightful ruler of the world. The ruler of their life—the shaper of their existence.

4. What does 'love for all the saints' mean?

God's love in their life for people they have not previously been connected to or had any interest in are now the objects of their love and interest.

5. Why is Paul giving thanks to God and not the Ephesians?

Because it is God who has done this in them. If it was up to the Ephesians, nothing like this would have happened — they are dead in their sins and trespasses.

Prayer Point 1 - To Know God Better v17

6. How do we get to know God better v17?

When the Spirit of wisdom and revelation is given to us.

7. How does Paul describe the God that the Spirit reveals to us?

The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father.
The point is that Jesus, Lord and Christ, describes for us who God is, he is the glorious Father.

Prayer Point 2 - Enlightenment about we are called to be v18

8. What adjectives does Paul use to describe the hope before us?