



## Overview of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

### Introduction

The Book of Ephesians describes the exalted position each believer possesses in Christ through God's grace. The apostle Paul explains that there are privileges and responsibilities for believers, both Jews and Gentiles alike, and they are all to walk in obedience to God. Although facing spiritual warfare, God's people are alive in Christ in the heavenly places, promised victory in Christ in daily relationships and over unseen enemies, and may conquer and possess their promised possessions in Him for a victorious Christian life.

The theme of Ephesians is found in Chapter 1, verse 3, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ*. The key thought is "*in Christ*" and in knowing Him as the head of His church. Paul explains how each believer has an exalted position in Christ and is to walk worthily and victoriously in this position.

### Outlines of Ephesians

The content of Ephesians may be described in several ways. In his commentary, Sit, Walk, Stand, Watchman Nee divides it using only three words:

- I. Sit - Chapters 1-2,
- II. Walk - Chapters 3-4,
- III. Stand - Chapters 5-6.

Other outlines of Ephesians include:

- I. The Wealth of the Christian - Chapters 1-3
- II. The Walk of the Christian - Chapters 4-5
- III. The Warfare of the Christian - Chapter 6  
(J. Sidlow Baxter, modified by A. Wetherell Johnson)

- I. New Life - 1:3-2:10
- II. New Society - 2:11-3:21
- III. New Standards - 4:1-5:21
- IV. New Relationships - 5:21-6:24  
(John Stott)

- Introduction 1:1-2
- I. The Church - The Heavenly Calling - 1:3-3:21
- II. The Church - The Earthly Conduct - 4:1-6:18
- Conclusion - 6:19-24  
(G. Campbell Morgan)

In Chapters 1-3 the doctrine of the believer's position in Christ becomes the basis for Chapters 4-6, which present practical ways to work out this wonderful doctrine in the circumstances of daily life. This structure is typical of Paul's letters. Doctrine is followed by practical application.

Building on the tiny preposition "*in*" as the key word of Ephesians, and "*in Christ*" as the key phrase and thought, we will use the following outline in this study:

- I. Position in Christ - Chapter 1
- II. Privileges in Christ - Chapters 2-3
- III. Practice of Purposeful Living in Christ - Chapters 4-5
- IV. Spiritual Power in Christ - Chapter 6

### Overview of the Book of Ephesians

In Chapter 1, Paul opens with the theme of spiritual blessings *in the heavenly places in Christ* (1:3). Through the riches of God's grace, the believer possesses all spiritual blessings in Christ. Through God's redemptive work on the cross, believers are united to Him by the indwelling Spirit and have assurance of an eternal inheritance. Desiring all the faithful to fully understand the blessings God has bestowed, Paul launches into a powerful prayer for spiritual wisdom.

In Chapter 2, Paul explains that by God's grace and mercy, Jews and Gentiles are made one body in Christ through the Spirit. Those who were separated from God and *dead in trespasses* (2:5), have been reconciled to Him and given eternal life that *He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus* (2:7). The key concept of Chapter 2 is reconciliation (2:16). Paul makes it clear that all the work is God's and there is nothing we can do to save ourselves, *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God* (2:8). By His grace, those who were spiritually dead are alive and those who were once far from God are now reconciled to Him through the perfect life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 3 explains the *revelation* (3:3) given to Paul regarding the mystery of the church which was hidden in past ages. God's divine plan and purpose was the unity of Jew and Gentile into one new body of believers, the church. The marvelous redemption of men and women by grace through faith in Christ is for both Jew and Gentile who receive Him as Lord and Savior.

Paul again drops to his knees to pray for the inner strengthening and knowledge of all believers. His desire is that all may know the love of Christ (3:19) and be rooted and grounded in that love (3:17).

Chapters 4 and 5 turn to the practical application of the doctrine Paul has explained. Being grounded in the knowledge of God's gracious and glorious blessings, we are to live accordingly and *walk worthy of the calling with which you were called* (4:1). Paul describes the Christian walk in Chapters 4 and 5. This walk includes serving others through spiritual gifts He has given to each believer. Through exercising of these gifts, we can share God's saving grace with the unsaved and also affirm and build up others in the faith.

Believers are to *walk in love* (5:2), in obedience, and purity as God's people. We are to be wholehearted in our worship and work, putting off the old sinful habits and putting on new righteous patterns of behavior.

In Chapter 6, Paul addresses spiritual warfare in the Christian life. He reveals that the forces opposing us are not flesh and blood, but powers of darkness and

spiritual forces of wickedness which seek to destroy our lives and testimonies for Christ. As "Christian soldiers" we are to put on *the whole armor of God*, so we may be *able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand* (6:13). Paul describes our spiritual armor by giving the image of a soldier dressed for battle with the belt of truth, gospel boots of peace, *breastplate of righteousness*, *shield of faith*, *helmet of salvation*, *the sword of the Spirit*, and the powerful defensive weapon of prayer (6:14-18). We are to *be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might* (6:10), for Jesus Christ is victor and victorious over all!

### Applications

1. Have you received Christ Jesus as your Lord and Savior by grace through faith? If you are not sure or would like to understand more about this, please ask your group leader or class teacher for a copy of the Disciplers Confidence Letter.
2. As a believer, do you know your spiritual blessings in Christ? Will you take the challenge, as you embark on this study, to memorize Ephesians 1:1-14 so you may treasure these blessings in your heart?