

## THE LOVE THAT ABOUND

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### **SYNOPSIS OF THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS**

PART I. The Church and the Plan of Salvation.

Note: Paul is discussing the plan of salvation in the different epistles, somewhat varies the emphasis. In Romans he especially dwells upon faith apart from works. In Galatians, faith apart from ceremonial observances. In Ephesians he lays great stress upon the UNITY OF BELIEVERS.

Paul's appeal to the church

Paul now makes his appeal to all Christians that they should be established in love and grace, and be solidified by God's great promise, that he would never remove his love from us. The foundation of God's throne is righteousness and truth, and between righteousness and truth is love, which binds them together. The love of God will root us, lift us, spread us and stretch us. This is God's perfect will for all his children that they are established in love, abounding in grace and steadfast in faith. By this the world will know that we are his disciples if we love one another. (John 13:35)

### **TIME AND PLACE**

It is not possible to determine the date of this Epistle with exactness. It was written at a time when Paul was a prisoner, # Eph 6:20 and hence must have been written either at Caesarea or at Rome. Meyer inclines to the first place, but the general consensus of opinion is that it belongs to the group of the Epistles, which were sent forth from his Roman prison. Tychicus was the messenger to whom, on the same journey, were entrusted both this and the Epistle to Colosse. # Eph 6:21 Col 4:7

### **THE DIVISION OF THE BOOK**

Chapters 1-3, shows that the church was foreordained of God, that it had been redeemed, and that Jew and Gentile have been made one in Christ. In chapters 4-6, the Apostle enters upon a practical application, enforcing unity, love, newness of life, walking in the strength of the Lord, and the armour of God.

### **WHO FOUNDED THE CHURCH**

The Ephesian church was virtually founded by Paul. About the close of his second missionary journey he paused at Ephesus on his way to Jerusalem and preached in the Jewish synagogue.

# Ac 18:19-21

Leaving Priscilla and Aquila to follow up the impression which he had made, he went on, but returned on his third missionary journey,

# Ac 19:1

at which time he spent about three years,

# Ac 20:31

preaching the gospel with a success which threatened to effect an entire revolution in the city and province,

# Ac 19:17-20

and finally stirred up the avaricious fears of certain trades which profited by the old superstitions to such an extent that a commotion was aroused which caused him to leave the city. Since that date he had not seen Ephesus, though he had met the elders of the church at Miletus when on his way to Jerusalem.

### **THE CITY OF EPHEBUS**

The city of Ephesus, a Grecian city on the Asiatic coast almost exactly east of Athens, was a great commercial metropolis in the first century, and the capital of the Roman province, which was called by the name of Asia. Its greatest distinction hitherto had been, not its commercial pre-eminence, but the splendid temple of Diana, which was counted one of the Seven Wonders of the world, it seated about 50,000 spectators. The city lay upon the edge of a plain, which extended to the sea, and in its artificial harbour were seen the ships from all the ports of the eastern Mediterranean. In our times, half-buried ruins are the only relics of its former greatness. The only inhabitants I saw upon the site in 1889 were the occupants of two black tents, who were pasturing their flocks upon the alluvial plain. We can still, however, see the proofs of its former magnificence in the outlines of the great theatre, and in the ruins of the temple of Diana.

# Ac 19:29,27

The modern Turkish village of Agasalouk, a wretched hamlet, is nearly two miles distant from the site of the Ephesus of the times of Paul.

### **INTRODUCTION TO EPHESIANS 3**

In this chapter the apostle hints at his state and condition as a prisoner, and at the afflictions he endured for the sake of the Gospel; and whereas he knew these would be objected to his ministry, and be discouraging to the saints, he chiefly insists on these two things; namely, to assert his office of apostleship, and observe the knowledge of divine mysteries, and gifts of grace bestowed on him, which he does with all modesty and humility; and also to exhort the saints to constancy and perseverance, notwithstanding his tribulations; for which purpose he puts up several petitions for them; and the whole is concluded with a doxology, or an ascription of glory to God.

Ephesians 3

#### **A PRISONER OF CHRIST**

1 I, Paul, am a prisoner of Christ Jesus because of my preaching to you Gentiles.

#### **PAUL'S INSIGHT INTO THE MYSTERIES OF CHRIST**

2 As you already know, God has given me this special ministry of announcing his favor to you Gentiles.

### **PAUL'S REVELATION BY GOD HIMSELF**

3 As I briefly mentioned earlier in this letter, God himself revealed his secret plan to me.

### **PAUL'S CONFIDENCE IN THE GOSPEL**

4 As you read what I have written, you will understand what I know about this plan regarding Christ.

### **PAUL WAS PRIVILEGED WITH REVELATION**

5 God did not reveal it to previous generations, but now he has revealed it by the Holy Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets.

### **PAUL'S INSIGHT INTO THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES**

6 And this is the secret plan: The Gentiles have an equal share with the Jews in all the riches inherited by God's children. Both groups have believed the Good News, and both are part of the same body and enjoy together the promise of blessings through Christ Jesus.

### **PAUL'S ENDOWMENT WITH GRACE AND DIVINE POWER**

7 By God's special favor and mighty power, I have been given the wonderful privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News.

### **PAUL'S RECOGNITION OF HIS UNWORTHINESS AND GOD'S GRACE**

8 Just think! Though I did nothing to deserve it, and though I am the least deserving Christian there is, I was chosen for this special joy of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ.

### **PAUL'S RESPONSIBILITY TO TEACH MEN OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD**

9 I was chosen to explain to everyone this plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning.

### **PAUL'S INSIGHT INTO THE RICHES OF GOD'S WISDOM**

10 God's purpose was to show his wisdom in all its rich variety to all the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. They will see this when Jews and Gentiles are joined together in his church.

### **PAUL'S INSIGHT INTO THE COMPLETE WORK OF CHRIST**

11 This was his plan from all eternity, and it has now been carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.

### **PAUL'S BOLDNESS BEFORE THE PRESENCE OF GOD**

12 Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come fearlessly into God's presence, assured of his glad welcome.

### **PAUL'S JOY IN SUFFERING FOR THE GOSPEL**

13 So please don't despair because of what they are doing to me here. It is for you that I am suffering, so you should feel honored and encouraged.

### **PAUL'S ATTITUDE OF WORSHIP**

14 When I think of the wisdom and scope of God's plan, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father,

### **PAUL ACKNOWLEDGES GOD AS CREATOR**

15 the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth.

### **PAUL RECOGNIZES GOD'S UNLIMITED POWER**

16 I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will give you mighty inner strength through his Holy Spirit.

### **PAUL'S DESIRE FOR THE CHURCH TO BE ROOTED**

17 And I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts as you trust in him. May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love.

### **PAUL'S INSIGHT INTO THE LOVE OF GOD**

18 And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love really is.

What is Paul praying for?

Eph 3:1-12

Paul's second prayer for the spiritual fullness of the church and her enlightenment concerning the matchless love of Christ

Matthew Henry

The breadth shows (how wide) its extent to all nations and ranks

The length, that it continues from everlasting to everlasting

The depth, it's saving those who are sunk into the depths of sin and misery;

The height, it's raising them up to heavenly happiness and glory.

Those who receive grace for grace from Christ's fullness may be said to be filled with the fullness of God. Should not this satisfy man?

These four dimensions represent the love of Christ shown on the cross for the sins of the whole world. [JA]

John Gill

Ver. 18. May be able to comprehend with all saints, &c.] This is the end of their being rooted and grounded in love, that they, together with the rest of the saints interested in it, might have a larger and more comprehensive view of what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; not of God himself, who is incomprehensible by finite minds, and is not to be found out to perfection; see #Job 11:7-9 but either of the great mystery of salvation, particularly the mystery of the calling of the Gentiles mentioned in the beginning of the chapter; or of the spiritual

building, the church, the dimensions of which are given, #Re 21:15,16 or rather of the love of God, which in its length reaches from one eternity to another; in its breadth to all the elect, in all ages, places, and nations; and in its depth to saints in the lowest state of life; and in its height to bring them to an exalted state in glory.

John Wesley

verse 18. That being rooted and grounded-That is, deeply fixed and firmly established, in love. Ye may comprehend-So far as a human mind is capable. What is the breadth of the love of Christ-Embracing all mankind. And length-From everlasting to everlasting. And depth-Not to be fathomed by any creature. And height-Not to be reached by any enemy.

Peoples NT

May be able to comprehend. Unless they were "rooted and grounded in love" (#Eph 3:17) and the "love of God shed abroad" in their hearts (#Ro 5:5), it would be impossible for them to comprehend the exceeding riches of the love of Christ. This is the climax of prayer, the point to which the other petitions tend. Indeed, from the beginning of the Epistle, he has been declaring what love Christ has shown for the Gentile world.

Geneva notes

3:18 May be able to comprehend with all saints {i} what [is] the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; (i) How perfect that work of Christ is in every part.

Jesus shows the full extent of his love

John 13:1

Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He now showed the disciples the full extent of his love.

Matthew Henry

"Those whom Christ loves, he loves to the end. Nothing can separate a true believer from the love of Christ."

**God's great love**

Eph 2:4

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, (NKJ)

**PAUL PRAYS FOR AN EXPERIENCE OF GOD'S LOVE**

19 May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it. Then you will be filled with the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

**PAUL'S INSIGHT INTO GOD'S UNLIMITED RESOURCES**

20 Now glory be to God! By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope.

**PAUL'S DESIRE FOR THE CHURCH TO GIVE GLORY TO GOD**

21 May he be given glory in the church and in Christ Jesus forever and ever through endless ages. Amen.

1. We are no longer strangers Ephesians 2:19

We are no longer strangers to God and to his Son, in the sense that we are not castaways and alienated from his divine presence. We now share in the same benefits of salvation that the Jews have. We now can enjoy the revelation of God's eternal love, God's magnificent grace, communion with him, and be participants in the office of Christ. We now have the comfort and the encouragement of the Holy Spirit. Not only are these things ours, but we can rejoice in the fact that we have been adopted by the heavenly Father through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. [JA]

2. The Prophets and Apostle's laid the foundation

Ver. 20. And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, &c.] The prophets of the Old Testament, and the apostles of the New, who agree in laying ministerially the one and only foundation, Jesus Christ; for not the persons of the apostles and prophets, nor their doctrines merely, are here meant; but Christ who is contained in them, and who is the foundation on which the church, and all true believers are built: he is the foundation of the covenant of grace, of all the blessings and promises of it

3. We are held together by love Ephesians 2:21

Ver. 21. In whom all the building fitly framed together, &c.] This building is to be understood of all the saints, and people of God; of the whole universal church, which is God's building; and is a building of a spiritual nature, and will abide for ever: and this is fitly framed together; it consists of various parts, as a building does; some saints are comparable to beams, some to rafters, others to pillars, &c. and these are joined and united to one another, and are set in an exact symmetry and proportion, and in a proper subserviency to each other; and so as to make for the good, the strength, and beauty of the whole. And it all centers in Christ; he has a great concern in this building; he is the master builder, and the foundation and cornerstone; and it being knit together in him. [John Gill's commentary].

The meaning of Paul

small; little

The meaning of Saul

demand; lent; ditch; death

## **The Love of Christ**