

PAUL AS WRITER

- The letters of Paul to the Ephesians, the Colossians, the Philippians, and Philemon are known as the prison Epistles because they were written during his first captivity at Rome.
- Paul turned his imprisonment to good account, written four of the greatest and most Christ-exalting books of the New Testament.
- Colossians and Ephesians are complementary books; the subject of both is Christ and the church.
- In Colossians Christ is set forth as the head of the body (the church), and in Ephesians the church is set forth as the body of Christ (the head).
- The mystical relationship between the head and the body is so real that the church shares in Christ's exalted position on high.
- It is not surprising; therefore, that Ephesians introduces us to the most sublime themes that have ever occupied the human mind.
- In Ephesians we get the eagle's view.
- We can trace the apostle's thoughts as they soar above the confines of time and space beyond the mundane thoughts of ordinary men.
- Paul enjoys the heights but in Ephesians he also shows the way to victory in the daily life of the individual believer.
- Both our blessings and our battles are in the heavenlies.
- In some ways the city of Ephesus is unique in the New Testament.
- It was not a religious center like Jerusalem, a cultural center like Athens, or a political center like Rome.
- It was a Christian center.
- Pagans knew the city as a center of heathen activities.
- Its famous temple of diana (artemis)¹ was one of the seven wonders of the seven wonders of the ancient world and a source of terrible moral and spiritual pollution.
- But Ephesus is known around the world today not because of the temple that attracted thousands to its courts and courtesans, not because of its trade, but because of the Biblical truth that was taught there.
- Ephesus is known to all who know the Bible.
- Paul spent several years in Ephesus and a truly great church resulted from his ministry.
- Paul's final farewell words to the Ephesians elders reveal how diligently he had preached and pastured there. It service threw in the whole chapter twenty of Acts.
- Mark and the apostle John also ministered in Ephesus.
- Timothy is believed to have been martyred there for denouncing the licentiousness of a feast of diana (see footnotes no 1).
- It was from Ephesus that John was exiled to the offshore islands of Patmos.
- During that exile he wrote to Ephesus one of the letters to the seven churches.

¹ Take note that the name of satan, false gods, demon spirits, or any stronghold, are not capitalized. I choose not to acknowledge them, even to the point of violating grammatical rules.

- In that letter, dictated personally by the ascended Lord, he exposed the church's lack of love for the Lord Jesus, what one can read in Revelation two from verse 1 to seven.
- Their labors were commended, their loyalty was praised, but their lack of love was lamented.
- The Lord took this lack of love for Himself so seriously that He warned that if there were no repentance and revival, He would remove the lamp stand.
- Light without love is a barren thing.
- The Lord has no use for a church that no longer loves Him.
- When Paul wrote his Ephesians' letter, the events foreseen by John were still over the horizon.
- Yet the warnings Paul had issued several years before in his farewell to the Ephesians elders at Miletus show that he had his own private fears.
- The onslaught of a cult at nearby Collosae alerted Paul to growing dangers, but what destroyed the Ephesians church in the end was not falsehood, but formality.
- It became, so to speak, a cold, fundamental, orthodox, evangelical, Bible-believing church that lacked even a spark of its original love for Christ.
- As we read this Ephesians' letter, what impresses us is Paul's emphasis on love.
- He told us about our blessings, he talked about our behavior, and he warned us about our battles.
- But it is our Beloved, Christ, who dominates it all.

Come, then: join me in a tour of this letter, perhaps the grandest of all Paul's Epistles.

- Doctrine will thrill us in the book of Romans and discipline will confront us in Corinthians.
- We will read of deliverance in Galatians; deception in Colossians; discord in Philippians; duty in Philemon; and discovery in Thessalonians.
- **BUT IN EPHESIANS DEVOTION IS THE THEME.** There Paul was saying, "Take another look at the Beloved. Fall in love with Him afresh. He is the chiefest among ten thousand, the altogether lovely One, fairer than the fair, the glorious Bridegroom of our hearts".
- The city of Ephesus was large and important in Paul's day.
- It had a population of some 350,000 people.
- Centrally located on the western coast of Asia Minor, Ephesus was positioned midway between two continents.
- Here east met west.
- Here oriental luxury, extravagance, and sensuality met occidental enterprise, discipline, and ambition.
- Here sensual oriental religion blended with lofty and progressive Greek culture and firm, but on the whole fair, Roman government. Here crowds of government officials, Roman soldiers, and Jewish businessmen rubbed shoulders with Eastern pilgrims flocking into Ephesus to worship at the notorious temple of artemis².

² Take note that the names of demonic strongholds and principalities are not capitalized. I choose not to acknowledge them, even to the point of violating grammatical rules.

- The city was famous for the great arterial Roman road that linked it with the world, for its markets and warehouses, and for its administrative buildings and schools.
- But above all Ephesus was famous for its temple of diana (artemis).
- Heralded as one of the wonders of the world, it was the sacred shrine of the repulsively ugly image of the mother goddess artemis, an image reputed to have descended from the sky.
- In that temple worshippers enacted the licentious rites characteristic of many Eastern religions.
- Ephesus was Paul's headquarters during his third missionary journey.
- He stayed in the city for nearly three years and established a large, influential church.
- His colleagues and converts fanned out from Ephesus to evangelize the hinterland.
- They planted churches in city after city, including Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, Colossae, and Hierapolis.
- Names, associated with the church at Ephesus include Paul, Aquila, Pricilla, Apollos, Tychicus, Timothy, and the apostle John.
- The church there enjoyed the prolonged ministries of two apostles and was the only church in the New Testament to receive letters from two apostles.
- The letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians are complementary Epistles, written to address a heresy that had raised its head in the churches of the Lycus valley.
- Paul seems to have written the Epistle to the Colossians first, to emphasize the deity of Christ and His headship over the church, His body.
- In Colossians he set forth a cosmic Christ, the Creator of Heaven and earth.
- In Ephesians, on the other hand, eh emphasized the church as the body of Christ.
- The mystical relationship between Christ and His church, between the head and the body, is so real, however, that the church shares in Christ's exalted position on high.
- It is not surprising; therefore, that Ephesians introduces us to the most sublime themes that have ever occupied the human mind.
- Expositors have likened the Ephesians' letter to the Grand Canyon and the European Alps.
- Vista after vista appears.
- In Ephesians we get the eagle's view of things.
- We see the eagle rising and wheeling, then soaring off into the high vault of Heaven.
- We trace the Apostle Paul's thoughts as they wheel and as they soar above the confines of time and space beyond the mundane thoughts of ordinary men.
- We marvel at Paul's command of language, only to discover that even his eloquence is inadequate to convey the concepts of eternity completely.
- The Author, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God".
- The name Paul at the head of this letter commanded immediate attention.
- Paul's name had power in Ephesus.

- He had won large numbers of people there to Christ.
- As he reminded the Corinthians, a person might have ten thousand teachers in Christ, but he does not have many fathers.
- So a letter from the one who led them to Christ would always be cherished.
- At the end of his second missionary journey, on his way to Jerusalem, Paul paid a brief visit to Ephesus.
- He stopped at the local synagogue and made a friendly contact with the Jews and rabbis.
- He declined an invitation to stay in Ephesus because of his desire to be at Jerusalem for the feast.
- However, he left Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus to cultivate the spiritual ground there in preparation for his return.
- During Paul's third missionary journey, Ephesus became the centre of a spiritual awakening that embraced the whole area.
- The Jews as usual soon turned hostile but Paul, undaunted, turned to the Gentiles and the revival thrived.
- Miracles were performed.
- Paul's converts built a public bonfire to destroy their books of magic, books that were worth a small fortune.
- The Holy Spirit's power was poured out in ways that put the fear of God into those who tried to counterfeit His work.
- Describing this revival Luke wrote "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed" (Acts.19:20).
- Possibly it was at Ephesus that Paul suffered one of his many imprisonments, for this spectacular spread of the gospel did not go unhindered like we can see in 2 Corinthians 11:23.
- In 1 Corinthians 15:32 he spoke of fighting with wild beasts at Ephesus.
- In the end Paul was forced out of the city by a riot instigated by Demetrius the silversmith.
- When the mob seized Gaius and Aristarchus,
- Paul returned to Ephesus, as he had promised when he called there at the end of his second journey.
- He spent two years there, longer than anywhere else.
- He proceeds to the Jews first, in the synagogue.
- When they rejected him he hired a lecture hall as his headquarters.
- He could only have it when its owner was not using it, at the hottest time of the day, but people flocked to listen to him.
- Paul seems to have performed many unusual miraculous cures in this city.
- Perhaps he felt this was the 'language' the Ephesians best understood.
- Ephesus was swarming with tourists, many of whom came to visit the famous temple of Artemis³.

³ Take note that the names of false gods and deities are not capitalized. I choose not to acknowledge them, even to the point of violating grammatical rules.

- Ephesus was ideally placed as a centre of trade located on the main route from Rome to the East.
- It was a good centre for the whole Roman province of Asia.
- Ephesus was a centre of magic and magical arts, and books on magic were often called “Ephesians’ writings’.
- It had a vast theatre that could seat 20,000 spectators.
- The city’s spectacular ruins attract many visitors today.
- The letter of Ephesians is a letter of secrets shared.
- The great secrets of what God has planned for Jesus, for His people and for the whole universe.
- God’s purposes for His people are so marvelous that they must live lives to suit.
- Paul is full of excitement as he shares with the Ephesians some of the secrets of God’s plans, hidden down the ages until the coming of Jesus and His church.
- At the heart of God’s plans is Jesus Himself.
- Everything in the whole universe has its centre in Him.
- When the time is ripe God will ‘bring all creation together, everything in heaven and on earth, with Christ as head’.
- Paul’s readers must have tingled with excitement when they read that they, too, were part of God’s cosmic plans.
- 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are called the ‘Pastoral’ Epistles because they focus on the needs of the churches as God’s ‘flock’.
- Paul wrote to give these two young men guidance in their care (pasturing) of the churches they led.
- Paul had a very warm relationship with Timothy, like a father to his son.
- He showed his confidence in him by giving him responsibility as Ephesus.
- He encourages him, for Timothy seems to have been shy and under-confident, and tells him not to let anyone look down on him because he is young.
- He gives him help with the problems at Ephesus.
- After Paul has talked about the false teaching that has been going round at Ephesus, he advises Timothy about prayer in the church.
- Then he gives guidelines for choosing a church leader, and these set a very high standard.
- A church leader must be without fault; he must have only one wife, be sober, self-controlled and orderly; he must welcome strangers in his home; he must be able to teach; he must not be a drunkard or a violent man, but gentle and peaceful; he must not love money; he must be able to manage his own family well and make his children obey him with all respect.
- He must be mature in the faith.
- He should be a man who is respected by the people outside the church.
- Paul describes relationships in the church as family one: “Do not rebuke an older man, but appeal to him as if were your father. Treat the younger men as your brothers, the older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, with all purity’.
- Paul has invested a great deal of affection and trust in Timothy.

- He ends his letter with the plea: ‘Timothy, keep safe what has been entrusted to your care
 - The second letter to Timothy is a very personal one.
 - Paul has a good deal to say about Timothy as well as about his own situation.
 - In prison, expecting the death sentence soon, Paul thinks about Timothy with deep emotion and longs to see him again.
 - He wants to give him strength and encouragement while he still can.
 - He draws three pictures of the Christian life: as soldier, athlete and farmer. ‘Take your part in suffering, as a loyal soldier of Christ Jesus’ (2 TIM.2:3).
 - Like a good soldier, Timothy must aim to please his commanding officer and not get involved with other matters. Like a good athlete, Timothy must keep to the rules of the race.
 - Like a farmer, Timothy can expect to enjoy a harvest from all the hard work he has put in.
 - Paul speaks movingly about the end of his life, which is near ‘I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for His appearing’ (2 TIM.4:7-8).
 - He looks forward to a visit.
 - Timothy is to bring Paul’s cloak when he comes, as well as his parchments and books.
 - Something warm to wear and something good to read were needed in prison.⁴
 - Paul did not forget for a moment the tender love of so many in the Ephesian church.
 - He remembered his last farewell to the Ephesian elders at Miletus when “they all wept sore, and fell on Paul’s neck, and kissed him, Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they should see his face more” (ACTS.20:37-38).
 - Although Paul was separated from the Ephesians by miles and circumstances, he harnessed himself in the whole armor of God and sallied forth to do battle on their behalf daily.
 - He loved them all.
 - The proof was a letter ablaze with the love that many waters cannot quench, an Epistle for them that was God-breathed and deathless as God’s throne.
 - Paul’s Final Word: “Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen” (EPH.6:23-24).
 - Peace, the Hebrew salutation.
 - Grace, the Gentile salutation.
 - Love with faith, the Christian salutation.
 - Peace! Grace! Love! Faith! These words will ring on the chimes of time until at last earth’s shores recede and we stand amid the scenes of glory and lay our armor
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down, until grace gives way to glory, until faith gives way to sight, until love's vast ocean fills all horizons and bathes our souls in bliss.

- It came out so clearly in the letters, love and peace. "Peace be to the brethren". In this world we are in a battle. Satan's⁵ dog's of war will bark at our heels and hound us right down to the river. But we are not at war with the brethren.
- We may dislike and dispute some of their doctrines, but we are not at war with them. If we are, we are fighting the wrong battle.
- Love with faith.
- Love is the source and faith is the force.
- Love reaches down; faith reaches up.
- Love is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.
- Faith lies in between.
- Love reaches out the hand of God; faith takes hold of it.
- Love provides all we need; faith appropriates it.
- Paul began the letter of Ephesians with "grace" (EPH.1:2), and he ended it with "grace"
- It is God's unmerited, unlimited favor that shines upon us all the time along all the way.
- It is grace that set our feet on the highway to Heaven.
- It is grace that keeps us company all the journey through.
- It is grace that will see us safely home at last.
- Peace, love, faith, and grace come from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who are co-eternal and co-equal.
- How wonderful that God, in the supreme and crowning revelation of Himself, is a Father.
- Here Paul did not emphasize God as Judge, though He is a judge; nor did he emphasize God as the Creator, though He is the Creator; nor did he emphasize God as a holy God, though He is holy beyond all we could imagine.
- Instead, he emphasized that wonderful word FATHER!
- God is the Father, made known to us as such by the Son "the Lord Jesus Christ" (EPH.6:23), who is "our Lord Jesus Christ" (EPH.6:24).
- Sincerity, should characterize our love for Christ.
- The word translated "sincerity" in Ephesians 6:24 is "aphtarsia", which literally means "without corruption".
- Our love should be incorruptible.
- It should be a deathless unfading love that takes on the nature of immortality "So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption" (1 COR.15:42).
- With his final word, Paul left us face to face with our Lord Jesus Christ, contemplating a love relationship that reaches into eternity.

⁵ Take note that the name of satan and related names are not capitalized. I choose not to acknowledge he, even to the point of violating grammatical rules.