

"KICKING THE TIRES OF EPHESIANS"

4/26/2002

INTRODUCTION: Ephesians, The Rolls Royce of the Epistles

I have titled this lesson, "**Kicking the Tires of Ephesians.**" If you have ever looked at cars, especially used cars, one of the first things that you do is kick the tires. Today we begin our study of the book of Ephesians, which has been called the Rolls Royce of the Epistles. 1) We are going to kick the tires of this book. 2) We are going to look under the hood of this epistle. 3) And we are going to take Ephesians for a test drive.

What Makes it so Special?

- *It is not a problem solving epistle!*

Many other epistles were written to correct various problems in the church, but Ephesians was not.

-Galatians sought to correct the problem of legalism.

-Philippians was partially written to correct the problem of unity.

-1 & 2 Corinthians addressed a plethora of problems such as divisions, conflict, lawsuits, immorality and abuses in worship.

- *It has a heavenly focus!*

It changes our perspective from that of a citizen of this world to that of a citizen of heaven. It seeks to change our orientation from one, which is man-centered to one, which is God-centered. The first three chapters especially are filled with praise and prayer. It is almost as if the letter is directed to God and the reader has the privilege of listening in.

- *It emphasizes the believer's great riches in Christ!*

In this epistle Paul speaks of "*the riches of God's Grace*" (1:7), "*the unfathomable riches of Christ*" (3:8), and "*the riches of His Glory*" (3:16). We will learn that our riches are based on Christ's grace (1:2, 6-7; 2:7), His peace (1:2), His will (1:5), His kind intention (1:9), His purpose (1:9, 11), His glory (1:12, 14), His calling (1:18), His inheritance (1:18), His power (1:19), His love (2:4), His workmanship (2:10), His Spirit (3:16), His gifts (4:11), His sacrifice (5:2), His strength (6:10), and His armor (6:11, 13). [*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, p. viii]

The Prologue: Ephesians 1:1-2,

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and [who are] faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Author of Ephesians: (vs. 1a)

The Author's Identity!

- *Who is the author of Ephesians as clearly stated in the Scripture?*

Ephesians 1:1-

Ephesians 3:1-

- *Is this the first contact Paul had with the church in Ephesus? If not, when was Paul's first contact with the church in Ephesus and where is it recorded?*
- *What do the following passages have to say about Paul's previous contact with the church at Ephesus?*

Acts 18:18-21-

Acts 19:1-7-

Acts 19:8-9-

Acts 19:9-10-

Acts 19:11-12-

Acts 19:13-20-

Acts 19:23-41-

Acts 20:31-

Acts 20:18-35-

The Author's Role!

- What does Ephesians 1:1 say about the author's role?

NOTE: The term "apostle" means, "a sent one," "a messenger," or "one commissioned and sent out by a superior." It is used generically of a messenger as in 2 Corinthians 8:23. It is used technically as an official title. We see the 12 disciples of Jesus called Apostles (Matthew 10:2). Paul is consistently called an Apostle, as well as Barnabas (1 Corinthians 9:5-7), Apollos (1 Corinthians 4:6), and James the Lord's brother (1 Corinthians 15:7). An apostle was one who had witnessed the resurrected Christ, and was specifically commissioned by Christ to serve in that role. The work of an apostle involved preaching the Gospel (1 Corinthians 1:17), prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4), building up church leaders (Acts 14:23), and writing the Word of God by the superintending of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21). According to 2 Corinthians 12:12 Apostles were attested to by signs, wonders and miracles. According to Ephesians 2:20 the Apostles were foundational in the formation of the church.

- *According to Ephesians 1:1, what authority does Paul have to write this letter?*

The Recipients of Ephesians: (vs. 1b)

The Location of the Recipients!

- According to verse 1, where are the recipients of this letter located?

NOTE: Some of your Bibles might make mention that there are some early manuscripts that omit the words, "at Ephesus." This has led many scholars to the conclusion that Ephesians was a circular letter, intended to be circulated among all the churches in Asia Minor. It is possible, that the letter could have been a circular letter and was first sent to Ephesus. Because it was sent there first, it became especially associated with the church there. However, I do think that we can have confidence in the fact that the vast majority of manuscripts do include the phrase "at Ephesus" and no other location is ever mentioned in the manuscripts that omit it. We can be sure that the letter was intended for the church at Ephesus and likely copied and passed on to the other churches in the region.

Profile on the city of Ephesus:

Ephesus was a city of economic and commercial importance. It had a population of at least 250,000 people and was known for its great library as well as its opulence and wealth. It was located at the cross roads of civilization, sitting at the intersection of 4 of the most important Roman roads in Asia Minor. Politically, Ephesus was a free self-governing city. It also served as the home to the Roman governor of the province. The Ephesians primarily worshiped Diana, the goddess of the woodlands and fertility. The temple of Diana was one of the wonders of the ancient world dating back to the 6th century B.C. The temple grounds served as a center for religious prostitution and as one of the most important banks in the Mediterranean world. The temple also provided sanctuary for criminals since the temple area possessed the right of asylum. Any criminal who committed a crime and could reach the temple grounds before being apprehended was safe. The temple grounds were chaotic, filled with many priests, prostitutes, bankers, criminals, musicians, dancers, and frenzied hysterical worshippers.

The Description of the Recipients!

- *How does Paul describe the recipients of the letter in verse 1?*

- *What does it mean to be a saint?*

"No man is a believer who is not also a saint; and on the other hand, no man is a saint who is not a believer." John Calvin

- *What is the significance of the description, "faithful in Christ Jesus"?*

The Greeting of Ephesians: (vs. 2)

- *What are the two parts of this dual Christian greeting and why are they significant?*

"To greet a Christian brother or sister in this way is much more than a wish for general well-being. It is also an acknowledgment of the divine grace in which we stand and which has made us mutual members of Christ's body and of God's divine family." John MacArthur

- *Paul mentions the source of this greeting as "God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ," what is especially significant about Paul's statement here?*