
The Letter to the Ephesians

This is a “prison” letter from the Apostle Paul. It is ranked as one of the richest literatures for Christian theology and devotions. It has been considered by many as “The Queen of the Epistles.” This study of the majestic letter to the Ephesians involves looking at its major themes.

Themes of Ephesians – God’s Grace

There are 12 verses in the letter to the Ephesians that mention God’s grace. Some of the best known are shown below:

Ephesians 2:5 - even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)

Ephesians 2:8-9 – ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Questions:

Why do you think it was so important for Paul to emphasize God’s grace?

How does faith come into play in our salvation from God?

What is the “gift of God” in Ephesians 2:8-9, is it faith, grace, or both? (see also Ephesians 2:5)

Themes of Ephesians – Heavenly Places

Ephesians 1:3 - 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.

Ephesians 1:20 - which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places...

Ephesians 2:6 - and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 3:10 - to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places,

Ephesians 6:12 - For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Questions:

What are your thoughts on what Paul wants us to understand concerning heavenly places?

How do you understand the idea that we, as Christians, presently sit together in heavenly places in Christ (see Ephesians 2:6)?

Themes of Ephesians – Fullness

Ephesians 1:10 - 10 that in the dispensation of the **fullness** of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth-- in Him.

Ephesians 1:22-23 - ²² And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, ²³ which is His body, the **fullness** of Him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 3:14-19 – ¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ from whom **the whole family in heaven and earth** is named, ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend **with all the saints** what *is* the width and length and depth and height-- ¹⁹ to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the **fullness** of God.

Ephesians 4:13-15 – ¹³ **till we all come to the unity** of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **to a perfect man**, to the measure of the stature of the **fullness** of Christ; ¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head-- Christ--

Questions:

What do you think are the implications of the idea that the totality (fullness) of genuine divinity is now residing in the worldwide community of believers of Jesus, since all believers in Christ represents his body?

How do we understand spiritual growth from an individual and corporate point of view?

How do we understand the idea of heaven and earth being brought together in Christ?

Themes of Ephesians – Together - Oneness

Ephesians 1:10 - that in the dispensation of the **fullness** of the times He might gather **together** in **one** all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth-- in Him.

Ephesians 2:5 - even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive **together** with Christ (by **grace** you have been saved)

Ephesians 2:6 - and raised us up **together**, and made us sit **together** in the **heavenly places** in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:14-18 – ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who has made both **one**, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, ¹⁵ having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself **one** new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, ¹⁶ and that He might reconcile them both to God in **one** body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. ¹⁷ And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through Him we both have access by **one** Spirit to the Father.

Ephesians 2:21-22 - ²¹ in whom the whole building, being joined **together**, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built **together** for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Ephesians 4:4-6 - ⁴ *There is* **one** body and **one** Spirit, just as you were called in **one** hope of your calling; ⁵ **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism; ⁶ **one** God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

Ephesians 4:16 - from whom the whole body, joined and knit **together** by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Questions:

How important in the letter to the Ephesians is the theme of oneness or being brought together?

How important is the theme of oneness and togetherness in the Church universal?

Themes of Ephesians – Spiritual Warfare

Ephesians 6:10-19 - ¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; ¹⁸ praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints-- ¹⁹ and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel.

Questions:

Has there been a time when you felt opposition was coming from “forces of darkness”?

How have you used parts of God’s armor to defeat these evil forces, such as prayer, Scripture, your faith, etc.?

Is Ephesians 6:10-19 describing spiritual warfare that is primarily an individual’s battle, or are we also involved in the spiritual warfare of other people?

What are the roles of “truth,” “righteousness,” and “readiness” in overcoming spiritual opposition?

How would dishonesty, immorality, or a lack of preparedness contribute to an individual’s spiritual defeat?