

EPHESIANS – FACT SHEET 2



Authorship: more facts:

Apostle Paul (Eph. 1:1, 3:1, 3:7, 4:1, 6:19-20). Paul wrote Ephesians during his first Roman imprisonment. Authorship was unquestioned until the mid 18th century – but only on the ‘impersonal’ aspects of the letter as folk could not understand why the Apostle was not more personal to a group of people that he had spent 3 years working with. However, general thought is that the letter was a circular or perhaps addressed to a specific gentile (non-Jewish) group of believers in the church. All of the theology and format has the hallmarks of Pauline authorship and has great similarities to Colossians - which would have been written at the same time.

Ephesus: more facts:

- Most important city in western Asia minor (now western Turkey)
- Had a harbour – a great trading city
- Also home to one of 7 ancient wonders of the world – a pagan temple to the Roman goddess Diana (Acts 19:23-31)
- Paul laboured in Ephesus for around 3 years and used it as a base for his evangelism campaign
- City also had a major theatre that could house some 25,000 people – this was where the ‘assembly’ was called following the riot in Ephesus (recorded in Acts 19:23-41). The Town clerk who presided over this meeting had significant ‘say’ and authority – thus he is able to quell and dismiss the assembly.
- Ephesus is now uninhabited with no harbour (the sea is some 10km away). At its peak, in the first century BC – its population would have been around 300,000 – though as a trading centre – the numbers would be much greater on a day to day level.

Message & Audience: more facts:

- Written to believers in church at Ephesus and probably other Christians in ‘Asia Minor’
- No particular or specific heresy or error addressed
- Themes include: God’s eternal purpose for His people/Church, salvation by grace through faith alone, the role & nature of the church in God’s plan, the practical implications of a saving faith to be lived out in church, family & work, the victory over the ‘enemy’ (Satan).
- The church is one of those addressed in Revelation – although described as a church with discernment – the criticism was that the church had lost its ‘first love’ (Rev 2:2).

Chapter One:

As we come to the end of our considerations of chapter one – we can see that we have seen two major sections:

Verses 1-14 – Doxology and Praise – Paul praising God for what He has done – it is ‘all of Him’ and ‘all to the praise of His glory’. God has predestined us, chosen us in Him, adopted us, redeemed us and sealed us by His Spirit – guaranteeing our future ‘In Christ’. In Week one - we saw that God is so serious about us that He has:

SOUGHT us
SAVED us
SEALED us

Such a discovery can only lead to a response of praise!

Verses 15-23 lead us naturally from praise to prayer – with our challenge being that we need to “*Be Serious about Prayer*”.

Our prayer comes out of what we know and discover about God – after reminding us of the amazing lengths God has gone to – Paul can then say, ‘For this reason..’ (vs 15). Paul goes on to pray that the Ephesians will be enlightened by the Holy Spirit of God (the Spirit of Truth – John 14:26) – and that the ‘eyes of their hearts’ (inner selves) will be opened to grasp these amazing truths. Yet prior to prayer – Paul states what he has ‘heard’ about the Ephesian believers, that they have demonstrated the two-fold qualities of ‘faith’ in Christ Jesus and ‘love’ for the saints. Faith and love are the critical platform for any praying fellowship or believer.

Paul then gives us a model prayer in which he shows us that:

Prayer is PERSISTENT
Prayer is PURPOSEFUL
Prayer is POWERFUL

Busy activity is no replacement for prayer – without which, nothing happens.

Further Study on Prayer:

The New Bible Dictionary describes prayer as ‘the highest activity of which people are capable’ (NBD p444). The Biblical doctrine of prayer emphasises God’s character (John 4:24) – always ‘points’ to God – and is not merely some ‘shopping list’ of requests for our earthly convenience.

Old Testament:

Would often be referred to as 'calling on the Lord' (Gen 12:8); and was often associated with sacrifice (Gen 26:25). Main emphasis from Moses time was of that of Intercessory prayer (Exodus 32:11, 1 Sam 7:5, 1 Kings 8:22). Through Prayer, God's Word would often come (Deut 9:20, Isaiah 6:5). The Psalms contain the most prayers – being a prayer and praise book. The prayers within the Psalms vary from prayers for forgiveness (51), protection (59), healing (22,61) and vindication (109).

Prayers would also be offered up acknowledging God's majesty (Daniel 4:34-35), to dedicate places of worship (1 Kings 8:27-30), and for the community (Daniel 9:17-19).

There was no fixed 'posture' for praying – this could vary from lifting hands (Psalm 28:2), standing (1 Sam 1:26), kneeling (1 Kings 8:54), and bowing (1 Kings 18:42).

New Testament:

Jesus encouraged persistence in prayer (Luke 11:5, 18:1). He taught that prayer must be humble and penitent (Luke 18:10) and also expectant (Mark 11:24). Jesus also encouraged simplicity (Matthew 6:5) teaching that prayer is to be offered in 'His Name' (John 14:13). The early church was born in an atmosphere of prayer (Acts 1:4) through which the Holy Spirit is poured out. The Apostle Paul reveals the Holy Spirit as an assistant to prayer (Romans 8:14). Paul saw prayer as vital (Romans 12:12) and underpinning the Christian armour against the enemy (Ephesians 6:13).

Further Reading/Bibliography – My thanks go to!

- *The Holy Bible – (first of course!)*
- *Chosen for Good – Lewis, Clements, Haslam – Kingsway, 1986*
- *The Message of Ephesians – Stott – IVP, 1979*
- *God's Ultimate Purpose – Lloyd Jones – Banner, 2004*
- *Systematic Theology – Grudem – Zondervan, 1994*
- *Systematic Theology – Berkhof – Banner, 1994*
- *Epistle to the Ephesians – Hodge – Banner, 1964*
- *Ephesians – Wilson – Banner, 1978*
- *Ephesians – Foulkes – IVP, 1963*
- *All the prayers of the Bible – Lockyer – Pickering/Zondervan – 1959*
- *New Bible Dictionary – Ed Derek Williams – IVP - 1989*

*“Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your Word”
Psalm 119:18*