

Ephesians: Unity through Love

Introduction

The epistle to the Ephesians has received more accolades than any other epistle. John Calvin called it “his favorite epistle.” Coleridge pronounced it “one of the divinest compositions of man.” John Mackay said “to this book I owe my life.” C. H. Dodd named it “the crown of Paulinism,” and Arno Gaebelein called it “God's highest and best.” It has been called “the Queen of the epistles,” “the Alps of the New Testament,” “a Pisgah survey of the land of Promise,” “the Holy of Holies in Paul’s writings,” “the Grand Canyon of Scripture,” “the quintessence of Paulinism” and “the epistle of the Ascension.” When John Knox was near the end of his life, the book that was often read to him was Calvin’s *Sermons on the Letter to the Ephesians*.

I. The Author—Apostle Paul

II. The Audience—Ephesians was written and delivered first to the church at Ephesus by Tychicus (6:21-22) who also delivered Paul's letter to the Colossians (Col 4:7-9). The Ephesian church at that time was probably a network of house churches among whom this letter was circulated. The letter was probably circulated among the other churches of Asia Minor as well. The reference to “the letter from Laodicea” in Col 4:16 is probably a reference to the Ephesian letter that was being routed to other churches after the Ephesian house churches had read it.

III. The Aim—*To encourage the believers to love God and their fellow saints as the basis for unity.* Ephesians was written to the network of house churches at Ephesus who were suffering from Jew-Gentile disunity to encourage them to love God and one another as the basis for unity. This purpose is derived from four key observations. First, the various forms of the word “love” occur 20 times in Ephesians. This is 20 of the 107 times these words are used by Paul in all his writings. This is a very significant proportion. Second, the emphasis on love in this epistle fits well if Paul is promoting unity among the believers. Obviously, there can be no biblical unity if there is no true love. Third, Ephesians begins and ends with love (1:4, 6; 6:23-24). Fourth, when Paul later writes to Timothy at Ephesus in his first epistle to Timothy, he points to the importance of love at the beginning of the letter. “But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart” (1 Tim 1:5). Additionally, Christ’s letter to the Church of Ephesus in Revelation 2:1-7, thirty years later in A.D. 95, focuses on lost love.

IV. The Arrangement—

I. The Calling of the Church (1-3)	<i>Doctrine</i>	<i>Riches</i>	<i>Position</i>
II. The Conduct of the Church (4-6)	<i>Duty</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>	<i>Practice</i>
I. Wealth of the Believer (1-3)	<i>Sit</i>		
II. Walk of the Believer (4:1-6:9)	<i>Walk</i>		
III. Warfare of the Believer (6:10-24)	<i>Stand</i>		

V. The Analysis

- I. Salutation (1:1-2)

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II. The Source of Unity (1:3-23)

III. The Basis for Unity (2:1-10)

IV. The Doctrine of Unity (2:11-3:21)

V. The Maintenance of Unity (4:1-6:9)

VI. The Enemy of Unity (6:1-20)

VI. The Application