

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

When Written: Because Paul mentions his imprisonment (3:1; 4:1; 6:20), it is believed that this letter was written when Paul was held in Rome (Acts 28).

Theme: There are two main themes of Ephesians: (1) Christ has reconciled all creation to himself and to God, and (2) Christ has united people from all nations to himself and to one another in his church; This being by faith alone through God's grace. In light of these great truths, Christians are to lead lives that are a fitting tribute of gratitude to their Lord.

Purpose: Ephesians articulates general instructions for one's life after experiencing the redemptive work of God in Christ. Believers are to demonstrate unity within the church among diverse peoples; Honor God with their conduct in the church, the home, and in the world. Unity, love and peace are to mark the Christians' grateful response to the grace granted by their Heavenly Father.

Chapter 4: Unity of the Body of Christ. – Paul encourages the Ephesian church that without this fundamental foundation, the exhortations of Scripture become empty moralism. (v.1-16)

The New Life- Paul writes that as new creations in Christ Jesus, they are to: "*put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life... to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God...*" (v.22-24)

Chapter 5: Instructions to Walk in Love – This passage begins with: THEREFORE... Since they are now called to practice *unity* and embrace this *new life* which emulates the likeness of God, they are to demonstrate love and live a holy lifestyle; submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. (v.21)

Chapter 6: The Whole Armor of God - This chapter opens by continuing the sentiment, and providing further examples of mutually submitting to one another. Paul then portrays the Christian life as spiritual warfare and directs them to use the Lord's resources: *Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Faith, Confidence in their Salvation, The Holy Spirit, & the Word of God.*

Paul's Letter to the Church at Philippi

When Written: The letter to the Philippians was also most likely written while Paul was being held in Rome.

Theme: The main theme of Philippians is encouragement: Paul wants to encourage the Philippians to live out their lives as citizens of a heavenly colony, so that others might see their growing commitment in service to God and to one another.

Purpose (2:19-30): Philippi was the first church Paul founded in Europe (see Acts 16:6–40). Paul wrote to them prompted in part by his reception of their latest gift, sent with Epaphroditus (a member of the Philippian congregation). The Ephesians had heard that Epaphroditus had been seriously ill (2:25–30). Paul was sending him back to them, and hoping that he might also send Timothy before long. (2:19) Paul wanted to encourage the Philippians in their faith and assure them that despite his imprisonment he recognizes his situation to be a blessing because it is advancing the Gospel of Christ. (1:12)

Chapter 1: Greeting and Prayer - Paul greets his readers, expressing his gratitude and affection for them, followed by a prayer that their love would abound and their holiness increase.

Paul's Reflections on His Imprisonment - Paul assures the Philippians that although he is imprisoned, the gospel is still advancing. He is joyfully confident that no matter what happens Christ will be honored. (1:12)

To Live is Christ - Paul's life is not a matter of seeking his own comfort or advancement. It is all about seeking the advancement of Christ's kingdom. Should he die, he will rejoice in Christ's presence.

Chapter 2: Christ's Example – He calls them to unite in love and humility; and to live as Christ did in humble service to God. The passage of vv.5-11 is often referred to as the "hymn of Christ."

Timothy & Epaphroditus - Paul's desire is to send them his protégé Timothy, and to let them know that God has spared Epaphroditus (who is from Philippi), from his severe illness.