**PREACHING GUIDE**

Ephesians consists of only six chapters. In my particular copy of the Bible, it is only four pages. It contains only 155 verses. It will take you about 20 minutes to read the whole thing out loud. Yet we find divine beauty and power in this little book.1

**Chapter 1: we are chosen by god**

**Sermon Title:** Whom Do You Worship?

**Text:** Ephesians 1:3-14

**Focus:** Paul was a theological thoroughbred, and Ephesians 1:3-14 is sort of like his Belmont Stakes. He writes like a “tremendous machine”—to quote Chic Anderson, who called Secretariat’s famous Belmont Stakes race—as he exalts the triune God. He starts off in verse 3 with a general topic sentence and then widens out with phrase after phrase to touch on various redemptive themes without even stopping for a period! In Greek this is one long (202 words), complex, and glorious sentence that oozes with God-centered worship.

**Introduction:**

This passage is so important because we were made for praise. And we must have the right object of worship. Look around and you will find expressions of praise: teenage girls screaming at boy band concerts; sports fans exalting the virtues of their team, paying big money for tickets, and adjusting their schedules for the games; dads getting fired up about going to The Home Depot to work on a new project; adulterers praising their mistresses; consumers praising their favorite stores; television viewers praising their favorite new series; and coffee drinkers commending their favorite coffee shop. Humanity has never had a problem expressing praise. The question is not, “Do I worship?” The question is, “Whom do I worship?” Whom do we worship? We should praise the triune God. We should praise Him for who He is and what He has done.

I. Greeting (1:1-2)

II. Chosen by the Father (1:3-6)

A. The Goal of Election: Holiness (v. 4)

B. The Grace of Election: Adoption (v. 5)

III. Redeemed by the Son (1:7-10)

A. We Have Redemption (vv. 7-8)

B. We Have Revelation (vv. 9-10)

IV. Assured by the Spirit (1:11-14)

A. Assured of Our Privileged Status (v. 11)

B. The Sealing of the Spirit (v. 13)

C. The Guarantee of the Spirit (v. 14a)

D. To the Praise of His Glory (v. 14b)

**Chapter 2: We have communion with god**

**Sermon Title:** Praying to the Glorious Father

**Text:** Ephesians 1:15-23

**Focus:** In this prayer of thanksgiving and intercession, Paul expresses gratitude to God for the Ephesian believers, and he prays for them to grow in their knowledge of God and in their awareness of all they have in Christ, who is over all.

**Introduction:**

This text reveals some important truths about prayer, emphasizing prayer for knowledge and understanding. We need the Spirit’s help to grasp the greatness of God, the supremacy of Christ, and the rich benefits of the gospel.

Verses 3-14 are a hard act to follow, but Paul does so with this magnificent prayer! Verses 3-14 are about praise, and verses 15-23 are about prayer, which is still mingled with praise. The first section is about the spiritual blessings of salvation, and the prayer is about grasping them. Praise and prayer belong together, and they are fundamental to the interior life of the Christian. As we pray with Paul, we can observe three parts to this text: thanksgiving (vv. 15-16), intercession (vv. 17-19), and praise (vv. 20-23).

I. Thank God for Evidences of Grace in His People (1:15-16)

II. Ask God for Divine Illumination (1:17-19)

A. To Know God Better (v. 1:17b)

B. To Know the Blessings of the Gospel Better (vv. 1:18-20a)

III. Praise God for His Exaltation of Christ (1:20-23)

A. Christ’s Resurrection (v. 20a)

B. Christ’s Enthronement (v. 20b)

C. Christ’s Supremacy (vv. 21-22a)

D. Christ’s Headship (vv. 22b-23)

**Chapter 3: We are saved by grace**

**Sermon Title:** But God...

**Text:** Ephesians 2:1-10

**Focus:** Broadly speaking, the paragraph consists of two sentences in Greek (vv. 1-7 and 8-10). The subject of the first sentence is actually “God” (v. 4), and the main verb is “made alive.” By His amazing grace God has made our spiritually dead hearts beat. Further, this passage is related to the previous section, especially 1:19-20, which describes God’s mighty work in raising Jesus from the dead. This same power raises us from death to life. Allow me now to highlight three truths about God’s work in bringing us life.

**Introduction:**

Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) was a philosopher (among other things) and is considered the founder of utilitarianism (“the greatest happiness principle”). He was an interesting figure in more ways than one. His name actually appears in the TV show Lost (as an alias of the character John Locke). In Bentham’s will he apparently left a fortune to a London hospital. But there was one condition: Bentham was to be present at every board meeting. Reportedly, for more than one hundred years, the remains of Jeremy Bentham were wheeled into the boardroom every month and placed at the head of the table. His skeleton was dressed with seventeenth-century garb and a little hat, which sat on his wax head. In the minutes of every board meeting, a line read, “Mr. Jeremy Bentham, present but not voting.”2 This was a joke from his philosophy. Of course, he never voted because he had been dead since 1832. Today we come to a passage that shows when we were spiritually dead, God made us alive with Christ. We were “present but not voting” until God gave us life.

I. Apart from Christ, We Were Spiritually Dead (2:1-3)

A. We Were Dead (v. 1)

B. We Were Disobedient (vv. 2-3a)

C. We Were Doomed (v. 3b)

II. With Christ, We Are Spiritually Alive (2:4-7)

A. God’s Character (vv. 4-7)

B. God’s Work (vv. 5-7)

1. Alive with Christ (v. 5)

2. Raised up with Christ (v. 6a)

3. Seated with Christ (v. 6b)

4. Grace in Christ (v. 7)

III. In Christ, We Are God’s Workmanship (2:8-10)

A. Salvation is a Gift (vv. 8-9)

B. Salvation Results in Good Works (v. 10)

**Chapter 4: We are members of god’s household**

**Sermon Title:**   
Our Corporate Identity

**Text:** Ephesians 2:11-22

**Focus:** Paul makes another contrast in this passage,   
reminding believers of their prior alienation from God and His people, and what Christ has done to reconcile them to God and one another.

**Introduction:**

We live in a world of rivalries: Republican vs. Democrat; North vs. South; PC vs. Mac; Coke vs. Pepsi; Gandalf vs.   
Saruman. For Auburn fans, it is Alabama. For Michigan, it is Ohio State. For Duke, it is North Carolina. For Kentucky, it is Louisville. Rivalries are everywhere. Then there are   
violent rivals who kill each other due to cultural and racial hostilities.

In Ephesians 2:11-22 Paul describes a deep, complex, hostile rivalry between Jews and Gentiles. Gentiles are non-Jews. The Greek word is *ethna* in verse 11 (non-Jewish ethnicities). This rivalry was religious: Gentiles did not know the God of Israel. It was cultural: Jews had rituals, feasts, and ceremonies that distinguished them from the nations. It was racial: the Jews could boast of having the blood of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob flowing in their veins.

Yet through Christ these two enemies have become friends. Paul says this unity proclaims the mystery of the universe (3:10). Jesus accomplished this peacemaking work through His sacrificial death.

I. Alienation: Who We Once Were (2:11-12)

A. Christ-less (v. 12a)

B. Foreigners (v. 12b)

C. Hopeless and Godless (v. 12c)

II. Reconciliation: What Christ Has Done (2:13-18)

A. Christ Has Brought Us Peace (v. 14a)

B. Christ Has Made Us One (vv. 14b-16)

C. Christ Preached Peace (v. 17)

D. Christ Has Given Us Access to God (v. 18

III. Identification: Who We Have Now Become (2:19-22)

A. Citizens of God’s Kingdom (v. 19a)

B. Members of God’s Family (v. 19b)

C. Stones in God’s Temple (vv. 20-22)

**Chapter 5: we are reconciled to others**

**Sermon Title:** Sent and Empowered

**Text:** Ephesians 3:1-21

**Focus:** Like the Ephesian church, we are also called to love the church and fulfill her mission of making Christ known to everyone. We should acknowledge and appreciate Paul’s unique role in redemptive history, but we should not distance ourselves from his mission. God gave Paul the ministry of proclaiming Christ and explaining the unfolding plan of God to people; we as believers have that same purpose.

**Introduction:**

Have you ever been interrupted in prayer? Many things can cause this—babies crying, microwaves dinging, phones buzzing, doorbells ringing, or sirens sounding. Sometimes my wandering mind just goes elsewhere. I can begin to pray, and then all of a sudden I remember something I need to do or I get lost thinking about a ball game. Before I know it,   
I have chased a rabbit for several minutes. Staying focused in prayer is a challenge at times.

Paul appears to begin an intercessory prayer for the church in Ephesians 3:1, but then he goes on a holy rabbit trail and does not pick up the actual prayer until 3:14. Perhaps his digression is prompted as he reflects on his position as   
“the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles” (3:1).

Realize though that Ephesians 3:1-13 is more than a digression. The passage is part of God’s inspired Word and contains central themes in the book of Ephesians. Paul speaks of his sufferings, the incorporation of the Gentiles into the people of God, the cosmic nature of the church, the proclamation of the riches of Christ, believers’ access to God, and more.

I. Proclaiming Christ (3:1-13)

A. The Prisoner of Christ (vv. 1,13)

B. The Message of Christ (vv. 2-6)

C. The Grace to Proclaim Christ (vv. 7-8a)

D. The Incalculable Riches of Christ (vv. 8b-13)

1. God empowered Paul to proclaim His riches (v. 8b)

2. Paul received grace to explain God’s salvation (v. 9)

3. God empowered Paul to make known His wisdom (vv. 10-12)

II. Praying for Power (3:14-21)

A. Pray with Humility (vv. 14-16)

B. Pray for the Fullness of God’s Power and Love (vv. 16-19)

1. We need to be strengthened by the Spirit’s power (vv. 16-17a)

2. We need power to grasp Christ’s love (vv. 17b-19a)

C. Pray with Great Expectations (vv.20-21)

1. Unconditional love (v. 7)

2. God’s salvation (v. 7)

**Chapter 6: we are unified in the church**

**Sermon Title:** A Healthy Body

**Text:** Ephesians 4:1-16

**Focus:** Paul exhorts the Ephesian church to maintain unity, to use their gifts, and to grow in spiritual maturity.

**Introduction:**

Many people are interested in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. To live healthy, you have to have a healthy body. In Ephesians 4 Paul describes another body, the body of Christ. We should be even more interested in its health.   
We should listen closely to Paul, for we are part of this body as Christians. And we should pay attention because, unlike a lot of changing health opinions, this is eternal truth.

So, what is the nature of a healthy body of Christ, and how should it function? This essential passage helps us answer this question.

I. A Healthy Church is Marked by Spiritual Unity (4:1-6)

A. United by Divine Calling (v. 1)

B. United by Christlike Conduct (vv. 2-3)

C. United by Gospel Confession (vv. 4-6)

II. A Healthy Church is Marked by Spiritual Diversity (4:7-12)

A. We Have Diverse Gifts (vv. 7-10)

B. We Have Diverse Responsibilities (vv. 11-12a)

C. No One like the Enthroned Lord (v. 5)

III. A Healthy Church is Marked by Spiritual Maturity (4:13-16)

A. Maturity Involves Christlikeness (v. 13)

B. Maturity Involves Doctrinal Stability (vv. 13-14)

C. Maturity Involves Truth Joined with Love (vv. 15-16)

D. Maturity Involves Contribution (v. 16)

**Chapter 7: We are made new**

**Sermon Title:** Living Out Our New Identity

**Text:** Ephesians 4:17-6:9

**Focus:** Believers are called to live out their new identity in Christ with a lifestyle that is different from the world and different from their pre-Christian past.

**Introduction:**

You have probably heard the expression, “Like father like son.” Many sons take on characteristics of their dads and want to grow up to be like them. When I was a boy, I had a toy shaving kit so I could shave like my dad. I had shirts that matched my dad’s shirts.

Sadly, many children are fatherless or have a father who is absent or abusive. This generation has been called the “fatherless generation.” But thankfully, every believer gets to call God “Father.” Paul urges us to imitate our heavenly Father.

Paul paints a glorious picture of the Father in Ephesians (1:3,17; 3:14-15; 4:6). Now he adds that we must take on the Father’s character. We are God’s children and have been made brothers and sisters in Christ. We are to live out this new identity in every area of life.

I. The New Self (4:17-32)

A. Formerly but Now (vv. 17-24)

B. Living Out this New Identity (vv. 25-32)

II. A New Walk (5:1-17)

A. Walk in Love (v. 2)

B. Walk in Light (vv. 3-14)

C. Walk in Wisdom (vv. 15-17)

III. New Relationships (5:18–6:9)

A. Be Filled with the Spirit (5:18-21)

B. Husbands and Wives (5:22-33)

C. Parents and Children (6:1-4)

D. Slaves and Masters (6:5-9)

**Chapter 8: we have strength to persevere**

**Sermon Title:** Life is War

**Text:** Ephesians 6:10-24

**Focus:** Believers are called to stand firm in the midst of spiritual warfare by God’s power, with God’s armor, and in constant prayer.

**Introduction:**

In our culture everyone wants to talk about problems without talking about evil, faith, or the Spirit. Anyone who proposes a spiritual cause to a problem is labeled as a fanatic, or   
naïve, silly, unenlightened, or uninformed about the real   
issues. Some may give a sentimental value to those of faith but nothing more. In their hearts they believe such talk is inane.

We think we are so advanced, and yet the streets still run with blood; humans are being oppressed, treated like animals; families are breaking down everywhere, and so on. We are in a broken world that is influenced by the “god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4). The Bible will not allow for a simplistic answer to the problems of this world. Clearly there are some answers in the fields of sociology, biology, etc., but they cannot and will not provide all the answers. You must take into account sin and Satan when you try to assess the problems of this world. Paul, is not uninformed about the real problems; he is informing us about the real, unseen battle beneath these visible problems.

I. Be Aware of the Battle (6:10-13)

A. We Need the Lord’s Strength (vv. 10,11,13)

B. We Need to Know Our Enemy (vv. 11-13)

II. Be Equipped with God’s Armor (vv. 13-17)

A. Belt of Truth (v. 14a)

B. Breastplate of Righteousness (v. 14b)

C. Gospel Shoes (v. 15)

D. Shield of Faith (v. 16)

E. Helmet of Salvation (v. 17a)

F. Sword of the Spirit (v. 17a)

III. Be Devoted to Prayer (6:18-20)

A. Pray Comprehensively (v. 18)

B. Pray for Gospel Boldness (vv. 19-20)

IV. Final Remarks (vv. 21-24)

1. This preaching guide was adapted from the content provided in the *January Bible Study 2023 Personal Study Guide* by Tony Merida.

2. R.K. Hughes, *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ.* Preaching the Word   
(Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 66.