

## AP 43

### Ephesians / Προς Εφεσιους / to the Ephesians

At the time of writing of this epistle, Ephesus was the capital city of province of Asia. It was the principal trade port, along with Tarsus, in what we now know as Turkey. Ephesus was thought by most to be the 3<sup>rd</sup> city of the Mediterranean – behind only Rome and Athens. Ephesus is best known for the Temple of Artemis (or Diana if you prefer your god's Roman). I know you remember the temple is one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, so we come with due respect. The theater in Ephesus had a seating capacity of 24,000! Dang! That's 2,000 less than FC Cincinnati's stadium capacity. Ephesus probably had a population around 200,000. I only mention this because Ephesus isn't talked of with the same hushed tones of respect as are Rome or Athens.

The introduction of Ephesians identifies the author as Paul. Today, Pauline authorship is in dispute, but for me the burden of proof must be high and has not been met. Part of the reason for this high bar is because the book claims to be from Paul, but also this epistle was the first NT book to be attested as part of the canon – which would mean they believed it to be from Paul – just years after it was written. Ephesians is the only NT book – alluded to or quoted by the big three early church leaders – Clement, Ignatius and Polycarp.

Paul spent more time in the city of Ephesus than any other city on his missionary journeys. One of his stays recorded in Acts 19 was 3 years in length (Acts 20:31). Ephesus is one of the four prison epistles along with Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon. In 6:20 he refers to himself an ambassador in chains (see also 3:1).

Ephesians share a lot of parallel material with Colossians and is often compared with that book. **If Colossians focus is the head of the Church, Jesus Christ. Ephesians focus is on the church of which Jesus Christ is head.** Unity is a dominant theme in Ephesians.

**Sunday, Oct 16** Ephesians 1

**For Reflection:** In the Greek, the first half of this chapter (3-14) is a 12 verse, 202-word, single sentence (of the run-on variety) of praise to God for all he has done for us. This passage is rich in describing our identity in Christ. The second half of the chapter is a prayer. When I consider most of the church's prayers – I notice an outsized focus on physical health of its members. Paul prays for spiritual health of the church. *When is the last time you prayed a prayer like this for someone?* Make time today to pray this for someone and for your church?

**Lagniappe:** Psalm 72:18-19

Monday, Oct 17

Ephesians 2

**For Reflection:** This first section (1-10) deals with the subject that dominated thought in the reformation – How is it that we are justified, reconciled before God. In the second section (11-22) we see the theme of unity. *What does the phrase "alive with Christ" mean to you? How are you experiencing life with Christ? Why or why not? What is the biggest "dividing wall of hostility" in your experience and relationships?*

**Lagniappe:** Jonah 4:2 - Jonah is griping about God's grace, not praising! I find this to be curious that at times we don't like grace. Sometimes we don't want grace/mercy extended to others - ala Jonah. Sometimes we don't want grace for ourselves or believe grace can **extend to us. All of this is disastrous thinking, but we do it.**

Tuesday, Oct 18

Ephesians 3:14-21

**For Reflection:** Another prayer for spiritual health. As I read verse 17 I was reminded of Robert Mungers booklet "My Heart Christ's Home". *If your heart is understood metaphorically as a home - a home with rooms, some of which are active and heavily trafficked like kitchens and family rooms, but also some which are less visited, almost hidden rooms like attics and closets - then which room(s) would you find Christ in?*

**Lagniappe:** Exodus 25:8

Wednesday, Oct 19

Ephesians 4

**For Reflection:** We call ourselves a purple church at Northminster. Meaning it's a church of diverse opinions. *In an environment like ours what is the difference between unity and harmony? Verse 15 What does it mean to speak truth in love? Verses 22-23 - What aspects of your manner or behavior has Christ changed the most? What still needs to change?*

**Lagniappe:** Malachi 2:10 (I felt a weird need to have a lagniappe from the final book of the OT)

Thursday, Oct 20

Ephesians 6:10-19

**For Reflection:** *Are we in a spiritual battle? Using Paul's descriptions, what parts of your armor need a little more attention?*

**Lagniappe:** 2 Kings 6:8-17 Since you had a shorter reading, I took a little more freedom with the lagniappe.

## Titus / Προς Τιτον / To Titus

Titus is another pastoral epistle like 1 & 2 Timothy - written to an individual leader rather than to a church or group of churches. It is super practical in nature. Focusing on leadership instructions in chapter 1, ethics in chapter 2-3 – chapter 2 is a household code. Chapter 3 general ethics backed by deep theological truth 3:4-7.

**Friday, Oct 21**

Titus 1

**For Reflection:** We live in a post-modern culture distrustful and almost disdainful of authority and institution. Leaders are guilty before being proven innocent (or guilty). Paul is entrusting Titus to appoint leader for every church in Crete. *Verses 5-9 - Does leadership matter?* That was a real question. Most of us want to follow no-one. *Verses 10- 16 - Are there still enemies of the church?*

**Lagniappe:** Exodus 18:25

**Saturday, Oct 22**

Titus 3

**For Reflection:** The whole book makes it clear that ethics, morality and are way of life matters. Verses 4-7 makes it clear that though are lifestyle is important, it does not save us. *Do you believe this?* *Verses 9-11 – I am a sucker for unprofitable debates, how are you in this area? Why is Paul so harsh on the divisive soul?*

**Lagniappe:** Leviticus 19:2