

RELATED SCRIPTURES

Acts 28:1–31 | Romans 8:12–17 | Acts 13:48

STUDY FOR SERMON FROM 06.01.25

SUMMARY

The book of Ephesians is a letter written by the apostle Paul around 62 A.D. when he was under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28). Ephesus was the capital city of the Roman province of Asia. It was among the top five cities of the empire and, as such, an influential city in the spread of Christianity. Before his imprisonment, Paul spent a considerable amount of time in Ephesus, planting the church. This letter is essentially Paul's doctrine of the church—a community where God's power to reconcile people to himself is experienced and shared. This letter tells the church *how* to be the church. However, as is the pattern with all of scripture, Paul doesn't begin with a list of instructions; instead, he starts with reminders (indicatives) before detailing the instructions (imperatives). Paul divides his letter in half, with the first half composed of reminders (chapters 1–3), and the second half, instructions (chapters 4–6). After his greetings, Paul's first reminder to the church is that "in Christ," they've been given "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (v. 3). Because of Christ's atoning work, Paul tells the church that we are united with Christ—he indwells us; he is in us, and we are in him. From a justification standpoint, we hold Christ's status as firstborn heirs; we are co-heirs with Christ. Paul also reminds the church that this status is not a result of their own doing; instead, we were chosen in him "before the foundation of the world . . . according to the purpose of his will" (v. 5). For many, the concept of predestination is challenging to grasp as it points to attributes of God that are his alone, specifically his eternal, infinite, and unchanging nature. Simply stated, *nothing* can precede a being who is eternal, infinite, and unchanging, so it must be by the power of his sovereign purposes to bring the people of the church to himself. While it's not required of the Christian to fully understand how God's saving grace can be predestined, we must realize that we are saved by his grace alone—not by our achievement, heritage, social status, or even our "goodness." We are saved "to the praise of his glorious grace" alone (v. 6).

GROUP QUESTIONS

Share something that surprises, encourages, or troubles you from the sermon or your direct reading of Ephesians 1:1–6.

What does it mean to be "in Christ"? To what extent are believers united to Jesus? How does being united in Christ affect how you face difficulty and trials?

What do you find challenging about the doctrine of predestination? What do you find comforting about the doctrine of predestination?

If there's one thing Jesus would want you to walk away believing and receiving as a result of this portion of scripture, what is that thing?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

As you pray, be sure to include today's themes in what you bring before God.