



Lessons from Paul's Life and Ministry

LIVING IN CHRIST

Ephesians 1:1-23

Inductive Discovery Lesson 8

What would you do if your future was indefinitely suspended? When Paul wrote this letter, he was living under house arrest waiting for his case to be heard in Caesar's court. After 30 years of tireless traveling, the missionary preacher wasn't allowed to step outside his front door. His "house" was likely a three-room apartment in a modest, but still overcrowded, Roman neighborhood. Paul was nearly sixty, weather beaten and body worn, but he wasn't about to slow down or stop preaching! True to habit, Paul invited leaders from the synagogue (since he was unable to go to them) to come to his rented quarters. He shared the gospel. They gave him a polite hearing and left.

Paul's door stayed open and the visitors poured in. When news of Paul spread through the local churches, Paul found himself enjoying conversation and fellowship with the Roman believers he wrote to just a few years earlier. Old friends and associates began to stop in. There were visits with Timothy and a reunion with John Mark. Luke and Aristarchus remained nearby. Onesimus, a runaway slave, came to faith under Paul's roof and became a loyal servant and friend. With Paul's help, he was able to return home.

There were others who came and went on a daily basis. Since Paul was in custody, he was chained to a Roman soldier at all times. They saw him deal with circumstances, they heard his conversations, and they could not help but listen when he prayed. What do you suppose they learned from this extraordinary old man? Paul couldn't leave his house, but no visitor left untouched.

From a human standpoint, Paul's life was put on hold. Seemingly "all" he could do was pray, write letters, and wait for life to pick up again. The substance of these prison letters reveals that Paul, in spite of an unclear future, saw the big picture. You will see it too. How? By doing what Paul did. Keep your eyes on Jesus.

Background

During Paul's third missionary journey, he settled in Ephesus for the better part of three years. The obstacles and dangers Paul faced during this time were so intense that he compared his experiences in Ephesus to "fighting wild beasts" (1 Cor. 15:32). For the record, more people responded to the gospel than at any other period of Paul's ministry, "so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord" (Acts 19:10). As a result of Paul's work in Ephesus, disciples went out and planted sister churches throughout the region, including Colossae. When the time came for Paul to leave Ephesus, he left the care of the church to godly men (Acts 20:28) and eventually sent Timothy to shepherd the flock (1 Timothy 1:3). The letter of Ephesians was not intended only for the church in Ephesus; it was meant to be circulated to all the churches throughout Asia.



Tracing Paul's Steps: *Second and Third Missionary Journeys*

- Paul is eager to re-visit churches established on the first journey. Barnabas wants to take John Mark; Paul does not. After a sharp disagreement, they separate. Paul asks Silas to partner with him. Paul delivers the Jerusalem decree (Acts 15) in every city he visits. In Lystra, Paul asks a promising young convert named Timothy to join them. Luke joins the team shortly after. (Acts 16)
- In Troas, a man in a vision asks Paul to come to Macedonia. Paul and his team sail to Macedonia and make their way to Philippi. While there, Paul and Silas are beaten and thrown in jail. During an earthquake, they refuse the chance to escape; the Philippian jailer is converted. (Acts 16)
- Paul establishes a church in Thessalonica but is forced to leave after a riot. He has a brief and fruitful ministry in Berea, but agitators keep him on the move. Eventually Paul arrives in Corinth and is befriended by a Christian couple named Aquila and Priscilla. Paul settles in Corinth for 18 months; during this time, he writes two letters to the believers in Thessalonica. (Acts 17-18)
- From Corinth, Paul's team sails to Ephesus joined by Aquila and Priscilla. The Ephesians ask Paul to stay longer. He promises to return, God willing, but continues on to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, he visits the church to report on his activity; then he returns to Antioch. The second missionary journey lasts about 3 years. (Acts 18)
- After a time (about one year) Paul begins his third journey. This trip is to encourage the growing churches and gather a collection for the Jerusalem church. (Rom. 15:26; 1 Cor. 16:1) From Antioch, Paul follows his previous route through Galatia before making good on his promise to revisit Ephesus. For nearly 3 years, Paul has a thriving ministry in and around Ephesus. A sister-church is planted (probably by Paul's disciple, Epaphras) in nearby Colossae. (Acts 19) While in Ephesus, Paul becomes aware of problems within the church at Corinth. He responds by writing 1 Corinthians.
- From Ephesus Paul goes to Macedonia, likely visiting believers in Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. Along the way, he writes another letter to the Corinthians. Soon after, Paul arrives in Corinth. During his 3-month stay, Paul writes to believers in Rome and expresses his intention to visit them. Paul intends to sail directly from Corinth to Jerusalem, but changes his plans to avoid a plot against his life. Instead, he backtracks through Macedonia. At long last, Paul arrives in Jerusalem. (Acts 20-21)
- Within a week of his arrival, Paul is arrested and falsely charged with bringing Gentiles into the temple. Rescued from the angry mob, Paul finds himself in Roman custody. So begins an extended period of trial and defense: two years in prison at Caesarea, followed by two years of house arrest in Rome. (Acts 22-28) During this time, he wrote Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon.



Working Text for Ephesians 1:1-23

New International Version (NIV)

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love 5 He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will— 6 to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves.

7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace 8 that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. 9 And He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. 11 In Him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will, 12 in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory. 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of His glory.

15 For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. 17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better. 18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and His incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of His mighty strength, 20 which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.



OBSERVATION

Read the section and record what you see. **Use the first column to keep track of what you specifically find in the Bible passage.** (Who? What? When? Where?) Briefly describe, *in your own words*, what it says.

Use the second column to record information you gather from other sources such as a dictionary, concordance, maps, etc. You can also use this section to jot down **your thoughts, impressions or questions that come to mind.** *Do your best to follow Paul's train of thought.* Does he emphasize a particular topic? Are his words urgent? Encouraging? Commanding? What issues or problems does he address? What questions does he ask?

Ephesians 1:1-6

Facts from the passage:

My Research and Personal Observations:

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Ephesians 1:7-14

Facts from the passage:

My Research and Personal Observations:

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Ephesians 1:7-14

My Research and Personal Observations:

[illegible]

Facts from the passage:

My Research and Personal Observations:

This image shows a full page of primary-ruled paper. It features two vertical columns of horizontal lines. Each column contains 18 lines, creating a total of 36 rows for writing. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of each column, leaving small margins at the top and bottom of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Key Words and Phrases

Key words and phrases help us understand the main point the writer wants to make. How do we recognize key words and phrases? Here are some simple things to look for.

- When you see a word or phrase repeated, you can be sure Paul is using it to make his point.
- If you are unfamiliar with a word or its meaning, it becomes a key word *for you*. Take time to learn the definition so you will understand how it is being used in the sentence.

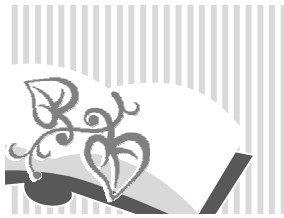
List any key words and phrases you found in Ephesians 1:1-23

Write the definition of the following words or phrases. Use a regular dictionary or a concordance with a Greek Dictionary if you have one.

“spiritual blessing” (vs.3) _____

“good pleasure” (vs.5,9) _____

“in Him” (vs.4,7,9-11,13) _____



INTERPRETATION — *What does it mean?*

Look for a spiritual lesson. Be careful not to read into the Bible an idea that is not there. Examine each verse in light of the verses around it. To help you find a spiritual lesson, ask questions such as: “Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a condition to that promise? Is there a warning to heed? Is there an example to follow or avoid?” **State the lesson in one simple sentence.**

APPLICATION — *How does it apply to me?*

We don’t study the Bible just to gather information—we want to spiritually grow. Our heart needs to be open to change. The only way to move truth off the pages of your Bible and into your life is to ***put it into action.***

To apply a spiritual lesson, we must examine ourselves and take deliberate steps to do something with what we have learned. Ask yourself: Is this a new insight for me, or does it reinforce what I already know? What does it challenge me to do? Does it point out error in my attitude or actions? What changes does it require? Think of how the lesson relates to you and what specific course of action you will take. **Write your application in the form of a question to make it personal.**

Ephesians 1:1-6

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

?

Ephesians 1:7-14

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

?

Ephesians 1:15-23

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

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Summary

Write a simple sentence that summarizes what the passage is about. _____

Give a title to the chapter that will help you personally to remember it.



Take a Closer Look

In Him, we have redemption through His blood,
the forgiveness of sins,
according to the riches of His grace
which He lavished on us...
Ephesians 1:7-8a NAS

Memorize God's Word

Choose the translation you prefer to memorize from and re-write the verse here.

Meditate on God's Word

Look up. What does this verse teach you about God? (For example, look for signs of His character, His attributes, His works, His promises.)

Look around. What does this verse teach you about the world and people in general?

Look within. What does this verse teach you about yourself?

Look ahead. Does this verse give you reason to hope? Briefly share your thoughts.

Look alive! Given the opportunity, how would you express the truth found in this verse to someone who needs to hear it?

Make God's Word Your Prayer

As you memorize and meditate on this verse, pray it back to the Lord. Let the Holy Spirit examine your heart, increase your understanding, and help you to pray. Ask Him for faith and strength to *act* on the truth of God's Word.



Something to Think About . . .

Pause to meditate on the grace Paul is describing here...the love God has demonstrated on the cross...is not a reluctant but a lavish love!

How suspicious of God many Christians seem to be. We do not trust Him; we doubt His goodness; we taste little of the sweetness of His grace. Here is what will dissolve paralyzing fears, cringing doubt, suspicious unbelief: *the riches of His grace...lavished upon us*. Yes, grace makes us rich.¹

- Sinclair B. Ferguson



God's Word Bearing Fruit

For you, personally, what has been the most important lesson from this study?
How will you put what God has shown you into practice?

¹ Sinclair B. Ferguson, *Let's Study Ephesians*, p.15

Message Notes:



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