

Women of Grace

• Lesson 17 • The Prison Epistles:
Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon •

Introduction

Within the context of this year's big picture focus on God's redemptive plan, this study of Paul's epistles will focus on the doctrinal foundation in Ephesians 1–3 and its practical application of how believers in the church are to live in expectation of the Lord's return.

"Above all (Ephesians) is a letter of encouragement and admonition, written to remind believers of their immeasurable blessing in Jesus Christ, not only to be thankful for those blessings, but also to live in a manner worthy of them. Despite, and partly even because of, Christians' great blessing in Jesus Christ they are sure to be tempted by Satan to self-satisfaction and complacency. Thus, in the last chapter, Paul reminds believers of the full and sufficient spiritual armor supplied to them through God's word and by His Spirit and of their need for vigilant and persistent prayer."

John MacArthur

Ephesians: Our Immeasurable Blessings in Christ, p.2

This year we are memorizing Ephesians 2. This week's verse is Ephesians 2:17...
"And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near."

Day One

*Read Ephesians 1–3; **The Doctrine and Blessing of Being in Christ***

1. How did last week's study in Acts 21–28, help you better understand the historical context for this week's study of the Prison Epistles?
2. From Ephesians 1:3, 5, 7, 9, 11; 2:7; and 3:8, what are some of the blessings and riches given by God to believers?
3. From Ephesians 1:2, 1:6–7, and 2:7; 1:5, 1:9, and 1:18–19; and 2:4, 2:10, and 3:16, identify some things upon which these riches in Christ are based.
4. From Ephesians 1:6, 12, and 14, describe in your own words what you think "to the praise of the glory of His grace" means.
5. How does Ephesians 1:9–12 support Paul's emphasis that right doctrine/thinking leads to right living?
6. What is the mystery described in Ephesians 3:1–6?
 - a. **Dig Deeper:** Remembering God's covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12:1–3, what aspects of the Gentile inclusion were previously known to the Jews, and what aspects are part of the now-revealed mystery?
 - b. How does this highlight God's wisdom and eternal purposes? How does that encourage you?

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Day Two

Read Ephesians 5:15–21; **Christian Conduct: Wise Living**

1. In Ephesians 5:15, Paul directs believers how they are to walk, described as “wise” (NASB) or “circumspectly” (NKJV). Use a dictionary to define both words. How does this help you better understand this command?
2. How do Proverbs 1:7, 1:20–33, 13:20; Daniel 12:3; and James 3:17 deepen your understanding of the meaning of wisdom?
3. According to Ephesians 5:16, how are believers to use their time, and why?
 - a. From this text and Psalms 90:12 and 39:4–5, how would that understanding help believers live wisely?
 - b. What do you think are some wise uses of one’s time?
 - c. In your own life, what can you do to walk more wisely? What are activities should you do less or eliminate altogether to help you walk more wisely?
4. According to 5:17, what connection did Paul make between wisdom and God’s will?
5. In verse 18, what positive characteristic did Paul give that should describe a believer?
 - a. From verses 19–21, what other characteristics should define those believers? Are those characteristics evident in your own life? Choose one area in which you would like to grow and write specific steps to do that.

Day Three

Read Ephesians 4:29–32 and 5:4; Colossians 3:8–10 and 4:6; and Philippians 2:14–16; **Christian Conduct: Godly Speech**

1. According to today’s Scripture reading, what is a believer’s speech to be, and what is it not to be?
2. From the areas listed below, circle those where you struggle.

Praising God

Grumbling/complaining

Arguing

Cursing

Yelling

Telling people off

Being critical

Gossiping

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Lying truth in love	Flattering	Sharing the Gospel	Speaking the
Boasting gratitude	Bragging	Encouraging others	Expressing

Taken from, *Colossians/Philemon: Completion and Reconciliation in Christ* (p. 87), by John MacArthur

- a. From this evaluation, pick one area to focus on and grow in, and write down what you will put in the place of your wrong speech. Share that with someone who will hold you accountable.
3. From Philippians 2:14–16, what instruction did Paul give, and why is it important?
 - a. In what specific situations that you face today do you need to commit to not grumble or question God?
 4. According to Philippians 2:16, what are believers called to do? What do you think that means?

Day Four

Read *Philippians 4:8–9* and *Colossians 3:1–25*; **Christian Conduct: Right Thinking**

1. From *Philippians 4:8–9* and *Colossians 3*, what are believers are to think about? Use a dictionary to define the meaning of those words.
2. Find one or two other Scripture verses that describe why one’s thought life is so important.
3. According to *Colossians 3:2*, what exhortation did Paul give, and why is that important? How does that help the believer to walk obediently? How does that help *you* practically to walk obediently?
4. From *Colossians 3:16*, what was Paul’s encouragement? What do you think that would look like practically and how would that help direct one’s thought life?

Day Five

Read *Philemon*; **Christian Conduct: Forgiveness**

1. From *Philemon 1–25*, briefly describe Philemon and Onesimus, and Paul’s purpose in writing this letter.
2. According to verses 10–16, how does the gospel transform relationships? Why was Philemon’s treatment of Onesimus important to the witness of the church?

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3. From verses 17–21, what gave Paul joy and refreshment? What steps do *you* need to take to build the unity of this church? Be specific.

4. How does Colossians 3:12–17 deepen your understanding on the importance of forgiveness and unity within the body of Christ?

5. Is there someone you need to forgive or is there a way you can help the body of Christ be more unified? Take time to ask God for wisdom and then write out some practical steps to apply these commands to your life.

The Prison Epistles: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon

I. The Author

II. The Themes

III. Our Joy Is in the Lord, So Suffer Well

IV. Christ Is in Us, So Forgive Others

Watkins Adapted from Every Woman's Grace at Grace Community Church of Sun Valley, CA March 15, 2017