

Two Year Bible Trek
Week 97
Ephesians, Colossians

Key Concepts: In Ephesians the key concept is that the church is God's creation and is intended to be a new kind of community in Christ and the Spirit. In Colossians the focus is on the sufficiency of Jesus for salvation and the living of a new Godly life.

Background: Many scholars have argued that the letter to the Ephesians is not a Pauline letter; even so it contains some of the great Pauline themes. Colossians is Paul's defense of his preaching versus that of some false teachers who were adding various elements to the basics of the Christian faith.

Brief Summary: Salutation and Thanksgiving (Ephesians 1:1-23) The writer begins with a generic greeting followed by thanksgiving to God for Christ and all that Christ offers (redemption, forgiveness, wisdom, insight, and the Holy Spirit). Thanks are then given for the church, along with a prayer that the church might know the hope that is found in Christ's death and resurrection.

Christ's Gifts to the Church (Ephesians 2:1-2:22) In some of the most beautiful writing in the New Testament, the writer then speaks of us being made alive by Christ, being saved by grace through faith, and being the workmanship of God. He also uses the image of us being turned from outsiders to insiders; and in so doing we have become fellow citizens with the saints of God.

A Prayer for the Gentiles (Ephesians 3:1-20) The writer, speaking as Paul, reminds his Gentile readers that they are now part of Israel, God's chosen people, through his (Paul's) preaching. Then he prays that God would grant that the Gentiles might be given strength, be rooted and grounded in love and be able to discern the reality of God's love in Christ that surpasses all knowledge.

Implications for Living (Ephesians 4:1-6:24) Jesus' followers are to live lives worthy of the calling of Christ. He offers a long list of appropriate actions including using one's spiritual gifts, not being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, speaking the truth in love, being built up into being Christ-like, putting off our old nature, renewing our minds in the Spirit, and being subject to one another.

Salutation and Thanksgiving (1:1-14) Paul makes it clear that he has a particularly loving place in his heart for the Colossians. He daily prays that they would be strengthened in their faith because of the inheritance that God has given them in Jesus Christ.

Christ is all that is Needed (1:15-23) The message here is that all things have been created through Christ and in him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. By his death the church has been reconciled to God.

Paul justifies his Intervention (1:24-2:7) Paul believes that he is justified in writing to a church he did not establish because he has been called by God to make known God's riches among the Gentiles and so that the church may not be deluded by beguiling speech.

Warning against False Teachers (2:8-23) The Apostle warns the church to be wary of teachers who want to convince them that salvation comes through religious rules, rather than Christ alone.

How Christians ought to Live (3:1-4:6) Believers are to do away with anger, malice and slander, put on compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness and patience, and above all love. He offers advice to husbands, wives, slaves and masters and encourages them to be steadfast in prayer.

Closing Greetings (4:7-18) Paul sends personal greetings from himself and other church leaders, including Luke, the beloved physician.

1. How have you experienced the all surpassing love of God?
2. What does it mean to you to lead a life worthy of our calling as Jesus' followers?
3. What do you think of Paul's advice to husbands and wives?