

Background on the Book of Ephesians
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1. When and where was Ephesians written?

Most scholars agree:

- **Date:** Around **AD 60–62** (about 30 years after the death of Christ)
- **Location:** **Rome**, during Paul’s **first Roman imprisonment** (Acts 28)

Ephesians is one of the “**Prison Epistles**” along with Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

Paul lived in a **rented house** during this imprisonment (Acts 28:30–31) and was allowed visitors—so writing and sending letters was completely possible.

2. How old was Paul when he wrote Ephesians?

Paul was likely:

- **In his late 50s or early 60s**

He was probably born around **AD 5–10**, and Ephesians was written around **AD 60–62**, placing him ~50–57 years old, depending on exact dating.

3. How long after Paul first visited Ephesus was Ephesians written?

Paul’s timeline with Ephesus:

- **Paul's first brief visit — AD 52 (Acts 18:19–21)**
He only stayed a short time but promised to return.
 - **Paul’s long ministry stay — AD 53–56 (Acts 19)**
 - Paul stayed in Ephesus **about 2½ to 3 years**
 - This was one of his **longest and most impactful ministries** anywhere
 - **Letter to the Ephesians written — AD 60–62**
So the letter was written:
 - **About 7–9 years after Paul left Ephesus**
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4. What was the city of Ephesus like?

Ephesus was:

A major port city

- Largest city in Roman Asia Minor
- Population: estimates vary, **200,000–300,000**
- Wealthy, cosmopolitan, influential

Center of pagan religion

- Home to the **Temple of Artemis (Diana)**
- One of the **Seven Wonders of the Ancient World**
- Major industry:
 - Tourism
 - Idols / shrines manufacturing (Acts 19:23–41)
 - Pilgrimages

Multiethnic and religiously diverse

- Predominantly **Gentile/Greek-speaking**
- A sizeable **Jewish community** (Acts 19:8)
- A mix of:
 - Wealthy elites
 - Merchants
 - Slaves
 - Foreigners
 - Roman officials

Spiritually charged atmosphere

- Ephesus had a reputation for:

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- Magic scrolls and sorcery (Acts 19:19)
- Exorcists (Acts 19:13–17)
- Occult practices

This background is important because Paul repeatedly emphasizes **Christ’s power over every spiritual authority** (Ephesians 1:19–23; 6:10–18).

5. What was the nature of the church in Ephesus?

A mix of Jewish and Gentile believers

But mainly **Gentile**:

- Paul began preaching in the **synagogue** (Acts 19:8), showing there was a Jewish minority
- After rejection by some Jews, he ministered in the **lecture hall of Tyrannus**—primarily Gentile audience
- Paul emphasizes that the Gentiles were once “outsiders” but are now part of God’s family (Ephesians 2:11–22)

Leadership

- Paul left **Timothy** to help lead the Ephesian church
 - Later, John the Apostle may have lived in Ephesus
 - Elders from Ephesus met Paul in Acts 20:17–38 (Miletus speech)
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6. Why did Paul write Ephesians?

Ephesians is unique because:

- It does **not address a specific crisis**
- It reads more like a **sermon or theological summary**
- Very “big picture” view of God’s plan for the church

Purposes include:

- To remind believers of their **identity in Christ**
 - To emphasize the unity of Jewish and Gentile believers
 - To show the cosmic scope of God’s redemption
 - To call the church to **mature Christian living**
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7. Structure and Themes of Ephesians

Ephesians is extremely well structured:

Chapters 1–3 — Doctrine (What God has done for us)

Often summarized as:

“Sit” — Sit in the blessings of God

Main themes:

- God’s eternal plan
- Spiritual blessings in Christ
- Grace and salvation
- Unity of Jews and Gentiles
- The cosmic scope of the church
- The “mystery” now revealed in Christ

Tone:

Praise → Prayer → Doctrine

Chapters 4–6 — Practice (How we live in response)

Often summarized as:

“Walk” and “Stand”

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- Walk in unity (4:1–16)
- Walk in holiness (4:17–32)
- Walk in love (5:1–2)
- Walk in light (5:8)
- Walk in wisdom (5:15)
- Stand against the devil (6:10–18)

Topics include:

- Church unity
- Spiritual maturity
- Marriage
- Parenting
- Household relationships
- Spiritual warfare

Tone:

Ethical, practical, community-focused

8. Why Ephesians Matters Today

- Defines **who we are in Christ**
 - Emphasizes the **unity of God’s diverse people**
 - Shows the **power of grace**
 - Offers a countercultural vision for **marriage, family, and ethics**
 - Teaches how to live faithfully in a **spiritually hostile environment**
 - Reminds believers to “take a stand” in spiritual battles
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9. A Simple Summary for Teaching

Ephesians 1–3: What God has done for us in Christ

Ephesians 4–6: How we live because of what God has done

Or put another way:

“Sit, Walk, Stand”

(a well-known theme from Watchman Nee)

1. **SIT** — Our Position in Christ (Ephesians 1–3)

Key idea: *The Christian life begins not with doing, but with resting in what Christ has already done.*

Paul starts Ephesians by telling believers to:

“Sit”

Not physically, but *spiritually*:

“God raised us up with Christ and **seated us** with him in the heavenly realms...”

— *Eph 2:6*

What “Sit” means:

- Rest in Christ’s finished work
- Receive God’s grace
- Understand your identity in Christ
- Know your spiritual blessings (1:3–14)
- Know you are saved by grace, not by works (2:8–9)
- Know you belong to God’s family
- Know God’s power toward you (1:19–20)

Summary:

Before we **do** anything for God, we must first **sit** in what God has done for us.

Identity before activity.

2. **WALK** — Our Life in Christ (Ephesians 4–6:9)

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Key idea: *Once we know who we are in Christ, we “walk” out that identity.*

The second half of Ephesians begins with:

“I urge you to **walk** in a manner worthy of the calling...”

— *Eph 4:1 (ESV)*

Paul uses “walk” repeatedly:

- **Walk** in unity (4:1–16)
- **Walk** in holiness (4:17–32)
- **Walk** in love (5:1–2)
- **Walk** in light (5:8)
- **Walk** in wisdom (5:15)

“Walk” means:

- Christian behavior
- Daily living
- Relationships with others
- Morality
- Marriage, family, and work relationships (Eph 5–6)

Summary:

We walk *out* what God has already worked *in*.

Behavior flows from identity.

3. STAND — Our Strength in Christ (Ephesians 6:10–20)

Key idea: *After we sit and walk, we must learn to stand firm against spiritual attack.*

Paul ends the book with:

“Put on the full armor of God, so that you can **stand** against the devil’s schemes.”

— *Eph 6:11*

And again:

- **“Stand** your ground” (6:13)
- “After you have done everything, to **stand**” (6:13)

“Stand” means:

- Hold your ground in spiritual warfare
- Resist temptation and the enemy
- Stand in God’s strength, not ours
- Wear the armor of God (truth, righteousness, faith, etc.)

Summary:

The Christian life ends not in defeat but in standing firm.

We fight from victory, not for victory.

The Whole Message of Ephesians in Three Words

SIT — What Christ has done for us

WALK — How we live in response

STAND — How we resist the enemy

Or even shorter:

Sit in your identity → **Walk** in maturity → **Stand** in victory.

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The book of **Ephesians** is a letter in the New Testament traditionally attributed to the Apostle Paul. It is addressed to the church in **Ephesus**, a significant city in the Roman province of Asia (modern-day Turkey), though some early manuscripts omit the phrase "in Ephesus," leading scholars to believe it may have been a circular letter intended for multiple churches in the region. Below is a summary of the background:

1. Authorship

- The letter identifies Paul as the author (Ephesians 1:1).
- While some modern scholars question Pauline authorship due to differences in style and vocabulary compared to his other letters, the early church universally accepted it as Pauline.
- Paul likely wrote it during his imprisonment in Rome (circa A.D. 60–62).

2. Audience

- Ephesus was a thriving city known for its commerce, culture, and the Temple of Artemis (one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World).
- The church in Ephesus had a mix of Jewish and Gentile believers, and Paul spent about three years there during his missionary journeys (Acts 19:1–41; Acts 20:31).
- The letter addresses a general Christian audience, focusing on themes relevant to all believers.

3. Themes and Purpose

- **Unity in Christ:** Ephesians emphasizes that through Jesus, God has united Jews and Gentiles into one body, breaking down walls of hostility (Ephesians 2:14–16).
- **The Church as Christ’s Body:** The letter highlights the church's role as Christ's body, with Christ as its head, emphasizing unity and purpose.
- **Spiritual Blessings and Salvation:** It underscores God’s grace, predestination, and the spiritual blessings believers receive in Christ (Ephesians 1:3–14).
- **Christian Living:** Ephesians provides practical instructions on how Christians should live, including guidance on marriage, family, work relationships, and spiritual warfare (Ephesians 4–6).

4. Key Verses

- **Ephesians 2:8–9:** “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”
- **Ephesians 4:4–6:** “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

5. Structure

- **Chapters 1–3:** Theological Foundation
Explores God’s redemptive plan, the unity of believers, and the spiritual riches available in Christ.
- **Chapters 4–6:** Practical Application
Discusses how to live out faith in unity, purity, and preparedness for spiritual battles.

6. Relevance Today

- Ephesians provides timeless lessons on identity in Christ, the importance of unity in the church, and practical guidance for daily Christian living.
- The emphasis on spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10–18) remains a crucial encouragement for believers facing challenges.