Session 1
An Introduction to Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians
by Jonathan Moorhead

I. Background of Ephesus

- Modern location: west coast of Turkey.
- In Paul's day: capital of the Roman province of Asia; major political center.
- Religious center: massive temple of Artemis (Diana), one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World (associated with a sacred stone/meteorite).

II. Authorship, Date, and Setting of the Letter

- Author: Paul.
- Location: Rome, in prison.
- Date: after the close of Acts, roughly AD 60–62.
- One of the Prison Epistles (with Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon).

III. History of the Church in Ephesus

- Founding and growth: Acts 18–20.
- Paul begins the work; leaves Priscilla and Aquila; Apollos assists; Paul returns for about three years; church established with a plurality of pastors.
- Timothy serves there after Paul's first Roman imprisonment (setting of 1 & 2 Timothy).
- Last biblical mention: Revelation 2:1–7 (about 30 years later)—Jesus rebukes them for leaving their first love (contrast with Ephesians 6:24).
- Church tradition: Apostle John dies in Ephesus; cares for Mary until her death.
- Later history: Third Ecumenical Council (AD 431) in Ephesus; Mary declared Theotokos ("Mother of God")—still debated.

IV. The Big Picture of Ephesians

- Core message:

- One-sentence summary:

Ephesians calls us to remember God's gracious and sovereign purpose to redeem spiritually dead, hopeless sinners by faith in Christ, unite them as one body in Christ, equip them by His Spirit, and transform them to live holy lives worthy of their calling—all for the praise of His glory.

V. Overall Structure of the Book

Six chapters.
Chapters 1–3: Doctrinal foundation.
Chapters 4–6: Practical application.

VI. Chapter 1 – Chosen, Redeemed, and Sealed in Christ

- Greeting (1:1–2): Paul, an apostle by the will of God, writes to the "saints… faithful in Christ Jesus."
- "Saints" now, because of union with Christ.
- Spiritual union occurs at the moment of repentant faith (cf. 1 Cor 12:13).
- Election and predestination (1:4–5):
  Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world "that we should be holy and blameless."
  Predestined for adoption "according to the purpose of his will."

Not based on foreseen faith or works (cf. Rom 9:10–13; Deut 7:6–8).
Basis: God's own loving will.
Goal: "to the praise of his glorious grace" (1:6).

- Redemption and forgiveness (1:7–9): In Christ we have redemption through His blood, according to the riches of His grace; God makes known the mystery of His will according to His purpose.
- Inheritance and sealing (1:11–14): Predestined according to the counsel of His will; sealed with the promised Holy Spirit as the guarantee of our inheritance—until the day of redemption (cf. 4:30)—"to the praise of his glory."
- Paul's prayer: that believers grasp the magnitude of these blessings.

VII. Chapter 2 – From Death to Life; One New Humanity

- Spiritual death / total depravity (2:1–3): Dead in trespasses and sins; following the world, the devil, and the flesh; by nature children of wrath.
- Supporting texts on the noetic effects of sin and inability: Jer 17:9; Rom 3:10–12; 1 Cor 2:14; John 6:44; etc.
- Unbelievers are not neutral or essentially good; they actively suppress the truth.
- But God… (2:4–5): Rich in mercy, because of His great love, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.
- Salvation is by God's will, not man's (John 1:12–13; Eph 2:8–9; Acts 16:14; 13:48).

"Remember" (2:11–12): You were once far off, without hope.
Unity of Jew and Gentile (2:11–22): One new man in Christ through the cross.

VIII. Chapter 3 – The Mystery Revealed

- The mystery (3:6): Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ through the gospel.
- Historical background: Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:1–3)—land, nation, and blessing to all families of the earth.
- Jews and Gentiles now joint heirs by God's eternal purpose realized in Christ (3:11).
- Prayer and doxology (3:18–21): Know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge; glory to God in the church forever.

IX. Chapters 4–6 – Walking Worthy of the Calling

- Therefore… walk worthy (4:1).
- Unity (4:1–6): One body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God.
- True unity rests on truth, not unity at the expense of truth.
- Spiritual gifts (4:7–16): Given to every believer to equip the saints for the work of ministry and build up the body.
- Put off / put on (4:17–24 and following): Renew the mind; replace old patterns with new (e.g., criticism with encouragement; corrupting talk with edifying speech). Battle begins in the mind (cf. Phil 4:8).
- Walk in love and be filled with the Spirit (ch. 5): Avoid sexual immorality, crude speech, coveting, time-wasting. Spirit-filling is ongoing submission and control (distinct from Spirit baptism at conversion); evidenced by singing, thanksgiving, and mutual submission.
- Submission in relationships (5:21–6:9): Wives, husbands, children, parents, slaves/masters—out of reverence for Christ. Authority is God's good design.
- The full armor of God (6:10–20): Already given in Christ (truth, righteousness, gospel of peace, faith, salvation, Word of God). Use it to stand firm in the evil day.

Remember God's gracious and sovereign purpose to redeem you when you were a spiritually dead, hopeless sinner. He made you alive by granting you faith in Christ, united you in one body in Christ, equipped you by His Spirit, and is transforming you to live holy lives worthy of your calling—all for the praise of God's glory. Give thanks and bless His holy name!