

## **Ephesians: The Grand Canyon Of Scripture**

### *The Book of Ephesians*

**H**ello! Welcome to Ephesians! It has been called “The Queen of the Epistles,” and “The Alps of the New Testament.” But around here, we like to call it, “The Grand Canyon of Scripture.” My name is Rocky, and I’ll be your tour guide as we explore this amazing book of the Bible. Thank you for joining us. You’re in for a real treat!

It is called “The Grand Canyon of Scripture” because like the Grand Canyon found in the western part of the United States, it is deep, and it is wide. That Grand Canyon is 277 river miles long. At one point it is 6000 feet deep (more than a mile) and at the widest it is 18 miles across. By comparison, the six short chapters of Ephesians, The Grand Canyon of Scripture, is where we can learn some of the most profound truths to be found in all of Scripture. It is deep in its exploration of God’s eternal purpose, so deep that we could never reach the bottom. It is wide in its description of the wealth available to us as members of the household of God. It is vast and colorful.

Before we begin our exploration of The Grand Canyon of Scripture, it is important for us to understand a few key concepts. We will stand today on the rim of the Canyon, and as we look out across this beautiful vista, I should point out some very significant highlights. The Apostle Paul was in prison in Rome around the year 60 when he wrote it, most likely to several churches in the province of Asia Minor known as Ephesus.

As we move deeper and deeper into the Canyon, some very amazing things will open up for us. On our journey, we’ll learn about a mystery which has been revealed to us. We’ll discover that God has an eternal purpose, which includes the fact that the Church is intended by God to be Christ’s present earthly body. We’ll explore the doctrines of the first three chapters, and then in the last three chapters, we’ll realize how what we believe is supposed to affect the way that we live. Toward the end of our tour, we will learn that as believers we have an enemy who has engaged us in spiritual warfare, and that to be victorious in that battle, we need spiritual weapons. But most of all, we’ll learn about the blessings that are ours in and through Christ.

Step with me now toward the rim of the Canyon. Look out across the scene before you, and you will see some breathtaking wonders. Here at the entrance to the Canyon itself, there is a gateway, supported by two pillars. One of them, as we see

in the first chapter, verse two, has “Grace” inscribed on it, and on the other we find the word “Peace.” Continue the thought: “*Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*” We are reminded that grace and peace can only come from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

You’ll notice that on the archway connecting the two posts of Grace and Peace are the words from chapter one, verse three: “*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.*” This verse stands at the beginning of our tour because it serves as one of the key truths that we’ll uncover on our journey. In fact, we might even say that the entire rest of the book of Ephesians is an expansion and explanation of this verse. We have indeed been blessed in some pretty astonishing ways because of what Christ has done for us. But, I’m getting ahead of myself!

We are here before the sun is fully up, so there are areas of the Canyon that are still in darkness. As the sun rises, and as we go down deep inside, we will be better able to see the glorious treasures that are there. So without further ado, allow me to direct your attention to the spectacular landscape before us. There are many magnificent aspects of this Grand Canyon you should see from this vantage point.

## **1 We are “in Christ”**

First, let us point out that one of the major themes of Ephesians is that God has worked in Christ to bring all things together under Him. In fact, in just six chapters, Paul uses the phrase “in Christ” or something similar 35 times! That’s more than any other New Testament book.

As you look over in this direction, you will see chapters 1, 2, and 3, and as we explore that together, *we will learn who we are in Christ.* Then, in this direction, chapters 4, 5, and 6 show us *how who we are in Christ affects the way we are to live.*

That phrase “in Christ” is so important to grasping the message of the book of Ephesians. What does it mean? When we read that we are “in Christ” we are not referring to a geographical location. You are “in” the church building right now, but that is not the way this word is used. It has more to do with our relationship to God through Christ. Here is a real good way to describe it: you are a member of a family, right? It may be large or small, but it is accurate to say that you are “in” that family. That is what we’re talking about here. We are “in” the family of God because we are “in Christ.”

Follow me as we point out from just the first chapter what this means to us. Even from the very first verse we learn that we are “in Christ Jesus.” In verse three, we learn that “*God has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.*” Verse four tells us that we are chosen in Him. Verse five tells us that we have been adopted through Christ.

Verse six tells us that because we are in Christ, God has freely given us His grace. In verse seven, we see that “*we have redemption through his blood,*” and “*the forgiveness of sins.*” We have been given an inheritance in Him, verse 11, and in verse 12, we have been given hope. Finally, in verse 13, we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit in Christ.

In chapter two, we discover that because we are “in Christ,” we have been made alive together in Christ (2:5), raised and seated with Him in the heavenly realms (2:6), created in Christ Jesus to do good works (2:10), brought near by the blood of Christ (2:13), and that through Him we have access to God the Father (2:18). That is just the beginning, but we’ll explore the rest of it as we move deeper into the Canyon. The point is that literally everything in our lives as Christians depends on our being “in Christ.” You cannot enjoy the blessings and wealth of the spiritual blessings unless you are “in Him.”

## **2 The Mystery has been revealed to us**

Another highlight we should look at before we begin the actual tour is that the book of Ephesians deals with a “mystery.” Most of us really enjoy a good “who done it” but this is not the way the word “mystery” is used. In the New Testament wherever you see the word “mystery” it refers to a secret, something which was previously hidden, but is **now** made known through revelation. In this case, God’s purpose in the Church is the mystery Paul is talking about. For example, in chapter 1, verse nine: “*And he made known to us the mystery of his will...which he purposed in Christ.*”

Then verse ten tells us what that mystery was: “*to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.*” That was the purpose of God in Christ through the Church, that Jew and Gentile alike should be brought into the Family of God. Because we are “in Christ” God has pulled back the curtain and shown us not only what He has done in the past, but also what He will do in the future. That’s pretty amazing, isn’t it? Five more times do we see this word “mystery” in this letter of Paul. It certainly is a major theme we’ll see more of as we are on our tour.

### **3 The Mystery has been revealed to us because of Grace**

The concept of grace is a major aspect of the Book of Ephesians. How do we know? Because we see that little word twelve times in only six chapters! It must be pretty important.

We've already seen it on the pillars of the gateway framing the entrance: "*Grace and peace.*" We will see it again and again throughout this letter, but the most powerful statement is found in 2:8—"*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.*"

Get this! We need to understand what grace is. God never deals with believers apart from grace. The word translated "grace" (*charis*) was used to describe a kindness that one did for a friend. But then Jesus came along, and the whole idea of grace changed, another part of the mystery which has been revealed. Instead of meaning a kindness you do for a friend, it now means something else entirely. It means that kindness is shown even to enemies, to those who least deserve it. The Bible makes it clear that because of sin we are the enemies of God, but He has shown us a kindness we did not deserve. That's what grace is.

We see an amazing thing in 1:7-8, that God has "*lavished*" this grace on us "*with all wisdom and understanding.*" That word tells us that God has given us grace above and beyond anything we might expect, that the grace of God is so great that it cannot even be measured, comprehended by the human heart, or even described with human language.

### **4 Receiving this Grace means that we are to live differently**

That's a highlight we primarily see in the second half of Ephesians. And we see it in the use of the word "walk," or in some versions, "live." For instance, in 4:1, we read, "*As a prisoner of the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.*" We are commanded in 5:2 to "*Live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*"

Further, we are told to "*live as children of the light,*" in 5:8, and in 5:15 Paul delivers this power statement: "*Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise.*"

Then in the rest of the book Paul outlines for us what that means. It involves things like being humble and patient, bearing with one another in love, speaking the truth,

avoiding sexual immorality, greed and obscenity. It means that we are thankful and that we find ultimate fulfillment in the Holy Spirit, and not in alcohol. Receiving the grace of God affects our relationships, particularly our marriages and our families. Then, finally, receiving the grace of God means that we are automatically engaged in a spiritual battle, and for that we need spiritual weapons. Paul tells us exactly what we need in order to be victorious.

So what all this means is that the presence of Christ in our lives, and our position “in Him” should result in a different lifestyle than that of those who do not know Him. Mark Driscoll has said it about as clearly as it can be said: “You can't meet Jesus and not change. If you haven't changed, you haven't met the real Jesus.” You see, no matter who you are, if you are a believer, you are the best Christian that somebody knows.

We are “in Christ.” The Mystery has been revealed, and that has happened to us because of the abounding grace of God. But receiving that grace means that our lives are transformed into works of art which bring honor and glory to Him.

So as we conclude our first stop on the tour of the Grand Canyon of Scripture, here are two things you need to remember. One, the first half of the book, chapters 1-3, describe the wealth we have “in Christ.” Two, the second half of the book, chapters 4-6, mandate for us the way we are to live since we are “in Christ.”

Has the Lord Jesus Christ become real to you? My prayer as we continue our tour of Ephesians, as we move deeper and deeper into this Grand Canyon, is that we will all experience Him in ways that will transform our lives and draw us closer to Him.